



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

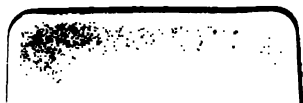
THE ANCHOR SERIES

BARBARA





600100954P





BARBARA:

A STORY OF CLOUD AND SUNSHINE.

BY

CLARA VANCE,

AUTHOR OF "STRAWBERRY HILL," ETC

EDINBURGH:

JAMES GEMMELL, GEORGE IV. BRIDGE.

1884.

1489. f. 204.



CONTENTS.

	PAGE
I. TOPSY,	1
II. JUNE'S STORY,	13
III. THE STORY OF PHILIP,	28
IV. POSING FOR THE TABLEAUX,	36
V. COMFORTING BARBARA,	51
VI. THE WALK,	56
VII. WASHING-DAY,	71
VIII. NURSE TOWNLEY TELLS HER DREAM,	80
IX. IN THE MOONLIGHT,	97
X. IN PRINT,	104
XI. THE LETTER,	110
XII. THE JOURNEY IN THE COACH,	130
XIII. BARBARA'S RECEPTION AT MORTLAKE.	143
XIV. AT MORTLAKE,	156
XV. THE INTERVIEW,	176
XVI. IN THE SPARE ROOM,	192
XVII. BARBARA'S DREAM,	198
XVIII. A LETTER FROM HOME,	211
XIX. MRS. WORCESTER'S STORY,	224
XX. HOME AGAIN,	237
XXI. MEETING THE LOVED ONES,	242
XXII. SAD NEWS,	258
XXIII. LIFE, NOT DEATH,	270
XXIV. WONDERFUL NEWS,	277
XXV. PHILIP'S RECEPTION,	288



BARBARA.

CHAPTER I

TOPSY.

"There's a drop of bitter in every sweet."

"**M**'M to be Topsy, hurrah!" cried Floss, flinging her apron over her head and dancing about in a grotesque fashion.

"You are just right for the character, Floss, you never did have any dignity," laughed stately Barbara, following the merry sprite with her eyes as she held her apron gathered over a handful of chips.

"I never expect to be as dignified as my tall queenly sister, or indeed quite like her in anything else;" and Floss swept a low courtesy.

"Be quick, dear, and make the fire," said Mrs. Bennet to Barbara; "supper to get, you know."

"Yes, *mother*."

The girl let her little stock of kindlings fall upon the broad hearth, and was soon successful in raising a cheerful flame, whose yellow light danced over her grave, beautiful face, and brought out the delicate tints of her complexion as well as the exquisite symmetry of her features.

Barbara Bennet was lovely, and her greatest charm was the fact that she did not seem to know how beautiful she was, both in character and person

Barbara was the old-fashioned name given by her grandmother, to whom they carried the child when she was only a week old. The dear old lady had been very ill, and was failing fast. She took the little one in her arms.

"Barbara, my pretty little Barbara," she said, thinking no doubt of her first-born, who had gone to be with the angels sixty years before. So they always called the child, Barbara.

Florence was the second sister, a girl of exceptional sweetness of disposition, a bright, happy creature of sixteen, a year younger than Barbara. Little Jane, out now in the garden gathering the earliest and the wildest flowers, the youngest of the three sisters, and in point of physical beauty the loveliest, was a sensitive, high-strung,

delicate creature, the pet, nay, the idol of the household.

Barbara had made the fire, and stood leaning on the low mantel, her head on her hand, looking into the amber depths of the dancing flame. The long curls of her shining hair were caught in a picturesque cluster, and fastened at the top of her head, falling even then in thick masses to her shoulders. Her mother, a pale, slender woman, on whose face was stamped the pathetic lines of endurance, looked up from the garment she was mending.

"Bab, dear, are you dreaming?" she asked; "hadn't you better put the kettle on and be making the biscuit?"

"Yes, indeed, mother," said Barbara, starting and flushing a little, "but I was thinking about the tableaux, and how I am almost sorry they are going to have them here in this great bare place."

She looked about her, shivering.

"Well, I don't know," her mother replied, musingly; "make the best of things, my dear; I don't see but it answers very well. At any rate they want it, and it seems to me to be the best room they could find."

Floss wheeled around from the window and came posturing down the carpetless floor. She was a sunbeam, and her mother seldom looked at her without catching a smile.

"It's just splendid!" she exclaimed, "just splendid, only Bab is so proud! I wonder what makes her so, mamma? We don't want better furniture for that night, if that's all,—the less the better,—so don't feel so badly, lady sister. Sam Drover is to put up the curtain, the girls are all busy making it now. If they are satisfied why shouldn't we be? Mamma, won't Bab make a splendid Cassy? All she has to do is to put on her grand, gloomy look. She can assume just the manner, you know; and June, she's so small, she'll be an adorable little Eva."

Barbara laughed a little. She was rolling biscuits now. A light towel was thrown loosely over her abundant tresses, the sleeves of her gingham dress were turned above her elbow, and the fair arms, than which the flour was scarcely whiter, flashed back and forth as she posed herself in attitudes as graceful as they were unconscious. Barbara smiled again, thinking of brown-eyed June as little Eva. She

worshipped the little fragile creature, and often in her heart likened her to the angels.

"Suppose you drop Topsy for a time," said Barbara, moulding the biscuits, "and set the table for tea? Oh, I forgot, we're out of tea, mother."

"Yes," said Mrs. Bennet, her face clouding.

"Can't Floss run up to the store?"

Florence was silent: so for a moment was Barbara,—then, looking curiously at her mother, and then at the floor, she said:

"Mr. Hoxey wants us to pay him, very much," she added, with emphasis.

"What! he hasn't refused to give us credit, has he?" asked Barbara, turning red to the roots of her hair.

"Yes, he has, at least I expect it means so," replied Mrs. Bennet, in a lower tone.

Barbara stood still for a moment, her eyes flashing, her mouth working.

"He's a mean man!" she said indignantly.

"We shan't get our money for a week yet," said Mrs. Bennet. "I'm sorry it's so late."

"But oh, mother, we have always paid him."

"Yes, dear, so we have."

"The bitterness of poverty," said Barbara

under her breath, and finished her biscuits without another word. Then she went up the wide creaking staircase, into a large desolate-looking bedroom, almost destitute of furniture, and from a little old-fashioned box took something daintily wrapped in silver paper. For a moment she looked at it, dashed away a few tears, then turned resolutely and went down stairs with the object in her hand.

"Here, Floss," she said, quietly, "tell Mr. Hoxey that mother wants a pound of tea."

"Oh, Bab!" cried her mother, "don't take that."

"It's her gold medal!" said Florence, quite awe-struck.

"And you were going to keep it for me," said little June, her hands full of flowers.

"We must have the tea, mother," said Barbara, in a determined but very gentle voice; "father needs it."

A hush fell upon the little group. Mrs. Bennet turned away with a sigh. Florence obeyed her sister's gestures to go and put on her hat. June sat down quiet and sorrowful.

It seemed scarcely a minute before Floss was back.

"He wouldn't take it," she said, her eyes shin-

ing, "so you see he has got a soul in spite of his little pig's eyes. He looked it all over in his great horny hand, and balanced it, and read it through his spectacles, and looked at me over them, and hem'd and haw'd, and then he threw it on the counter.

"'Tell your sister Barbara to keep it, child,' he said, and his voice wasn't as gruff as usual; 'she worked hard enough to earn it, I'll be bound. I'll trust ye for all ye want.' Wasn't that good of him?"

"He needn't have made it a necessity by his refusal," murmured Barbara, still wounded, as she took the medal earned by herself for best scholarship at the principal school in town, and put it quietly in June's hand to admire. June was never happier or prouder than when she wore this shining gift. And Floss went on setting the table, talking volubly of red curtains, satin dresses, white statues, and Topsy, while Barbara now answered, now seemed thoughtful, preoccupied and anxious.

Presently Mrs. Bennet poured out a cup of the fragrant tea for her invalid husband, placed some toast on a tray, with milk and sugar, and prepared to leave the room.

"Perhaps I shan't come back, girls," she said, as she stood in the doorway, looking weirdly white between the shadow and the light. "You won't mind."

"No indeed, mother," said Barbara.

"We'll amuse ourselves," responded Flora.

For a while the three girls ate their supper in silence. Then Florence raked up the coals, helped Barbara wash the dishes, and set back the table.

"Now what shall we do?" she asked.

"Anything you please," Barbara replied, in a listless way.

"Bab, what does ail you?" asked Florence, as, after snuffing the candle, she looked anxiously in her sister's face.

"Nothing; I am thinking."

"But it makes you so dull! I suppose you don't mind talking a little, and telling me what it is about."

"I don't know as I do," responded Barbara, and June's ear detected a sob. The girl ran to her side and dropped down on her knees.

"Don't cry, Bab, dear Bab," she said, piteously.

"No, darling, I won't," Barbara answered with bitter energy, as she wiped the hot tears from

her eyes ; " but oh, June, everything looks so hopeless ! I'm tired of it all."

" Now, Bab ! when you know papa may never have any more of these horrid spells, and is getting stronger every day. To be sure, everything ought to be different, at least, it seems so, but perhaps it is wrong to say that. Don't you remember the dear old words of our morning prayer ?

" ' Grant us patience under any afflictions Thou shalt see fit to lay on us, and minds always contented with our present condition.' I learned that prayer long ago ; its nice to get one all by heart, and then you can say it any time. I wouldn't feel so, Bab ; come, let us do something to divert our minds ; suppose we get up a game, puss in the corner, anything. Let's try to forget."

Barbara was in a very earthly mood this evening, albeit it was she upon whom always devolved the duty of family worship, morning and night—the cheerful words of Florence found no echo in her heart.

" Forget, she rejoined, in a faltering voice, " I can' forget. I'm tired of it all ; tired of being so miserably poor, tired of being in such a desolate, forsaken place ; why, I am afraid of it."

Floss and June looked round the bare walls with shrinking glances. The house had, in more prosperous times, been a tavern, and, as is the case with nearly all ancient hostelrys, there were some strange stories in circulation about it. In the room where they now sat, full fifty people might be, and often had been, entertained. It ran the entire length of the house, and seven long narrow windows, like so many tall grey spirits in the waning light, looking down upon them, glimmered along the wall. There was so little and mean furniture, the paper was so shredded in places, and pieces of plaster had fallen out, leaving the dark patches of skeleton laths, that it had, especially in the evenings, a weird and awesome look. It was different by daylight, with its fine prospect of woods and hills, orchards and uplands, browsing cattle, and wonderful clouds and skies, it was quite endurable, even in all its dilapidation; but at night, to Barbara particularly, it was something to be feared.

"Do you think it is haunted?" asked June, her great brown eyes fairly palpitating, as she crouched nearer to Barbara.

"Nonsense, child," half laughed the elder

sister, drawing a long breath and shutting back the glistening tears. "Haunted? no, only by such pretty things as you, and such commonplace people as we all are. What I mean is," she said, after a few moments of silence, "I'm tired of this bitter, biting poverty. I'm sure we can, in some way, rise above it; we ought to, but how, how?"

"Let's give concerts, recitations, tableaux, anything;" said Floss impulsively, "and June can recite. Why, she'd astonish the world, June would. What with your playing, and my voice, and June's declamations, why can't we make money? We can! We will!"

"You make us out a family of admirable Crichtons," laughed June.

"And so we are; we've wonderful talents," responded Florence, gravely.

Barbara joined in June's amused laugh, then shook her head slowly, as she looked over at the thin old piano, with shadowy legs, that stood in a niche.

"No," she murmured. "You don't know what you say, dear." Presently she added, with a sigh, "I wish we had not let the fire go down, it's so awfully lonely."

"Let's tell stories," June suggested, drawing nearer to her sister. Do you know, I made one yesterday about this old house?"

"Oh, June, that's just the thing. Do let us hear it," said Florence.





CHAPTER II.

JUNE'S STORY.

"She lightly weaves her magic wand,
And all around is fairy-land."

"**T**HEY boarded here you know."

"Who?" queried Barbara.

"Why, my story people, of course.

This house was then a famous country inn, and everybody who could came from the great city to get fresh fruits and cream. Among the people were some strangers from England."

"Oh, June!" laughed Floss.

"Of course; it was in colonial times, and these people were on a visit to their relations, who held positions of trust in the city, indeed, one of them was a Governor."

"His name was Brooks, I guess," said Floss; if so, then he was a relation of ours. But fancy your English visitors taking board in a place like this!" and she laughed heartily.

"Ah, but it was a fine house then, and had a splendid swinging sign, like the old taverns in England. There was a nice sweet smell about it, for it was kept very clean and wholesome. Little Lucy Kendall saw to that, she sanded this great floor beautifully, and washed the windows till they were like the clearest crystal. She loved flowers, too, and in summer time always kept the stands and the windows, and this old fire-place full of them. Never would she cover a table with a soiled cloth, and everybody praised the glass and silver, that is, what little silver there was. Her bed-chambers, too, oh, you should have seen them! every window shaded with curtains of spotless white, every bed so neatly and smoothly made."

"But who was little Lucy Kendall, dear?" asked Barbara.

"She was an orphan," said June, her voice unconsciously pathetic. "One of the loveliest creatures. Her eyes were blue, and her hair a shade of light brown, that caught the sunshine, and then it looked like gold. There is no use in my trying to tell you how beautiful she was, everybody admired her, and she was not in the least like young girls of our day. She wore

short dresses, and, when at work, a little cap with strings tied under the chin. Her cheeks were full of dimples, they made the hearts for the roses always there. Nobody knew who her mother was. She had come here a perfect stranger, sick, and almost dying; indeed, she did die in a week's time in this very house, leaving her little Lucy, whose father had died before she was born. You may be sure the story was sad enough, and here was this bit of an orphan. Fortunately the landlady, who was a good-hearted woman, adopted her. As she grew up, there was no complaint, except that the girl was too much of a lady. Her manners seemed refined from her birth. She would walk the whole length of this great room like a little queen.

"One night Lucy dreamed that her mother came to her in all the splendour of her beautiful new life, and said to her :

"My dear, be good and obedient. This is not your proper place, but it is the best that can be done for you. Never lose the little ring I left you with the two hearts and the red stone. Sometime it may do you great good. Study to give satisfaction to your kind foster-mother, but

at the same time remember that you came of gentle blood, and try always to be a lady. By and by, at the proper time, you shall have both position and fortune.'

"All this time the little room—she slept in my bedroom, dears, the one over the old pantry,—was as light as if the moonbeams, a thousand times brighter than their ordinary lustre, were filling it full, and when she awoke, it seemed to her that the brightness had not yet gone."

"You have got considerably ahead of your travellers," said Florence, as she held out her hand to catch the sheen of a floating moon-ray from the window opposite.

"I'm coming to that, pray let my little Lucy grow up. Well, she was seventeen on the very day this party arrived at the house. Oh, but they were high-bred; particularly Lady Maud."

"A lady, a live English lady—here!" cried Florence, clapping her hands.

"Floss, if you persist in interrupting me," said June, in her gravest tone, "I cannot go on."

"I beg ten thousand pardons, dear," cried Florence, folding her hands in meek supplication; "I am getting too deeply interested not to hold my tongue. There, now please proceed."

"Very well ; the eldest gentleman was a colonel, and Lady Maud's uncle—quite advanced in years, and very gouty. The third member of this little party was a young English nobleman, travelling for his health. Just imagine how the people stared when they drove up here! You see they had ordered rooms some time before, and the whole village was out in honour of their arrival. Such a fuss! such running and shouting! such ordering for dinner and for servants! dear, dear, it was as if a prince had arrived, and it took the villagers weeks to settle down again. My Lady Maud was very haughty, and very, very beautiful, not in the least like little Lucy; oh dear, no. She had high Roman features, lovely black eyes, and curling black hair that hung down in great masses. Poor little Lucy, who stood on the steps, was quite awed by so much greatness."

"Won't you please tell us how she was dressed, June, dear?" asked Florence, meekly.

"Certainly," June condescended. "She wore a blue-black riding dress, a red scarf, brown gloves, a black hat something like those we wear now, only turned up at the one side, and she carried a daintily embroidered leather bag.

The colonel was dressed in a sort of uniform, and the young gentleman wore a silk coat, and a red embroidered waistcoat, as was the fashion of those times," she added quietly.

"It happened that the moment Lady Maud set her eyes on little Lucy she took a strange fancy to her, and declared that she must have her to wait upon her, she having lost her English maid on the voyage."

"Was she drowned?" asked Barbara.

"No, very ill all the way, and just before they landed at New York she died. At first, Lucy was very unwilling, but her foster-mother persuaded her, and so she went into training. Lady Maud, not being very well, kept her room most of the time, only going out to ride in her own carriage, or attending the parish church on Sabbaths."

"Pray what rooms did they have?" asked the irrepressible Floss.

"The whole of the floor overhead," replied June; "and they never came down to meals, but had their food served in the front room, which was their parlour for the time. Lucy soon became very fond of Lady Maud, and the latter having very little to do, and being de-

lighted with the naturally fine manners of her little *protégé*, took pleasure in teaching her many things that she never would have known. One day she said to her :

“‘I wish you were an English girl, you look very much like one.’

“‘I am an English girl,’ said little Lucy, ‘at least, mamma was English.’

“‘What! are you not the daughter of these good people here?’ asked Lady Maud.

“‘No, indeed,’ said Lucy.”

“Ah! I see how it is to end,” said Floss, clapping her hands.

“Then there’s no use of my going on,” June responded gravely.

“Oh, yes, dear, do. I beg your pardon. I shouldn’t have interrupted; and I dare say I am wrong. I suppose, though, that Lady Maud and that sprig of nobility—I should say the young nobleman,” she added correcting herself, “were engaged to be married.”

“Not that I know of,” was June’s reply, “though he admired her very much, but when little Lucy was by he had eyes only for her. Well, the old colonel was crusty and cross: nothing suited him, and he grew very angry

sometimes, and, I am sorry to say, swore terribly. But Lucy, by some secret magic, always contrived to pacify him.

"‘I don’t know what there is in the little witch,’ he said sometimes in private to his niece, ‘but I believe that child can do anything with me. D’ye ever see her break an egg? I declare, it’s the perfection of taste and delicacy, and she says she never learned it. I dare say it comes by intuition—she’s a wonderful little lady. I wish we could keep her.’

"‘I am getting very much attached to her,’ said Lady Maud, whose grand manner was only shown to those she considered her social inferiors, ‘and if it wasn’t for Philip I believe I would keep her. She’d be a perfect treasure of a lady’s maid in time.’

"‘For Philip!’ exclaimed the old colonel, frowning, for he was his grand-nephew."

"All these talks took place in the parlour, of course," said Floss, whose earnest face told what interest she took in the story.

"Of course," June answered; "they wouldn’t have sat down here in the dining-room with the common people."

"‘Yes, uncle dear, Philip has taken a great

fancy to her; he thinks I don't see it, but I do. She's a sweet, innocent young thing, and I don't wish her head turned by his notice, so I think the sooner we go from here the better.' That set the old man to thinking, and made him very cross to Philip.

"'Maud,' asked her uncle one day, after a dreadful fit of the gout, 'do you remember your sister Caroline?'

"Lady Maud shuddered.

"'No, dear uncle,' she said, 'you couldn't expect me to remember her, could you? I was only a little babe at that time. I only know, however, that she was the beauty of the family, and disgraced herself and us all.'

"The fact is, Lady Caroline had run away with her music master, and had married him; of course, to a noble family, that was a disgrace which no repentance could wash out.

"'Humph!' said her uncle, 'I remember her well, and it has just occurred to me to-day that this little Lucy is her perfect image. Further, you know, my dear, that your own mamma's name was Lucy.'

"Lady Maud turned quite pale.

"'Of course, of course,' said her uncle care-

lessly, 'but likeness it is. This poor little chit is an orphan, too, and two and twenty years of age—two and twenty,' he repeated, and fell into a reverie, while Lady Maud could not read, she was so perplexed and astonished by his demeanour. Everybody wondered at Lucy's good fortune. She rode, as a maid, of course, carrying Lady Maud's pet poodle, in the splendid carriage, and people in her own station were a bit envious and malicious, and tossed their heads when they saw her, and said she gave herself airs, which was very, very far from the truth; little Lucy was too really noble to do that."

"She didn't scour the floors after Lady Maud came, did she?" asked Floss.

"I never said she scoured floors at all," said June with energy.

"Oh, only sanded them. I beg your pardon again," said Florence. "What a beautiful story! please go on, Barbara and I are getting anxious."

"As I said," continued June, whose sweet perfect face seemed encircled with a lambent fire as the moonshine came in, quite overpowering the small rays of the candle, "Lady Maud became very fond of little Lucy. One day she questioned her closely, until Lucy told her all

she knew. Her mamma had left her nothing, she said, but a little ring that had been given her when she was a very young girl.

“‘**And where is the ring, my dear?**’

“‘It is in my room in a box.’

“‘Go and get it,’ said Lady Maud.

“So Lucy went up-stairs, in my very room, and got the ring. Lady Maud looked at it very closely, and went into her uncle’s room where he was lying sick on a couch. The moment he saw the ring he flew up from his couch like a well man, and with a very strong expression cried out:

“‘I put that ring on your sister’s finger the day she was twelve years old, and there are her initials inside, C. L. D. Good heavens! this Lucy, then, must be her child.’

“Lady Maud stood there quite pale and faint. It was not so pleasant to feel that Lucy was her sister’s child; and that seems curious, too, but so it was. Perhaps she loved Philip, and was a little bit jealous of the beautiful young creature. It was a strange time, that, in the old house, you may be sure. Lucy stood like one struck into marble when she heard it all, and for a time seemed stunned. There was no more work for

her. Dress-makers and work-people were sent for from the town, and such beautiful dresses made for the lovely little Lucy, who was scarcely allowed to speak to the hotel-keeper and his wife, which was too bad, and shows that Lady Maud was not very amiable. Now, Lucy rode without the poodle dog, in the handsome carriage, wearing the loveliest dresses you can imagine, and when they went to New York again she was put under the care of teachers, and polished and trained till she was perfectly accomplished."

"I wonder if ever Philip, Lord Philip, married her?" queried Florence, while Barbara smiled and wondered too, as she often did, at the pretty fancies of her youngest and idolised sister.

"I can't tell you; I think it's time to end a story that way," said June.

"Oh, but he ought, unless he was engaged to the other one; we'll suppose, for the sake of my peace, that Lady Maud cared nothing for him, and that little Lucy became Lady Philip."

At that moment, a shrill, unearthly cry sounded through the house. Barbara sprang to her feet, June hid her sweet face in her sister's dress, and Florence groaned.

"Isn't it worse than it ever was?" queried Barbara, with white, trembling lips.

"Don't you know the doctor said he would not have them so often, but they might be more severe?"

"He said he thought he would not have them at all," June responded, trembling. "Oh, poor poor mamma, she had such hope! What shall we do? Suppose he should die in one?"

"Hush, June,—we can do nothing but wait. There's no danger now, I hope," said Barbara, after a little pause.

"I wish the candle wouldn't flare so," said Florence, a little crossly; "it makes the shadows look such crooked, twisty things. I wish we had a whole room full of light, so we could see in the corners."

"Nonsense, Floss," Barbara replied steadily, "the corners are not scarecrows, and the shadows are only shadows after all. June knows that, if she does tell ghostly stories now and then. I'm not a bit frightened over such things; it's only—" and she ended with a little cry of relief, which told how her heart had been burdened, for just at that moment the door opened, and her mother's face, a trifle paler than usual, looked in.

"I thought you might be frightened, girls," she said, with forced cheerfulness. "A little worse than usual, but soon over, so don't worry, but try and amuse yourselves. Barbara, you can light another candle if you like; I made a large supply yesterday. Be good children," and, with a patient mother-smile that was intended to be playful, she was gone.

They did not seem to feel like amusing themselves, however, but sat close together, bound by a common sympathy.

"Sometimes it seems to me that we are so much more unfortunate than other people," murmured Barbara, with sad eyes. "I don't believe you could find in a thousand a case just like ours."

"No, of course not," Florence responded, fingering the little black locket that hung on her bosom, suspended from a short chain. "We have lost property, papa has lost his health, we are proud and poor, and, worst of all, there's Philip. I guess June had him in her mind when she made up her story, didn't you, June?"

"Perhaps," said June, abstractedly.

"That's what broke poor father down," murmured Barbara, resting her cheek on her white, shapely hand.

"You remember all about it, don't you, Bab?" asked June.

"Yes, indeed," Bab answered, dreamily.

"How old were you then?"

"Ten; it was seven years ago," said Barbara.

"O! Bab, tell us just how it happened, and everything about it," pleaded Florence, drawing her low seat nearer. "That will be a true story."





CHAPTER III.

THE STORY OF PHILIP.

"My brother! oh thy name is yet
A treasured thought, and long will be."

"**Y**ES, a true story indeed," murmured Barbara. "Do hear how the frogs go on," and she looked up dreamily. "He *lived* in the days of Philip, poor boy. Father was a prosperous merchant then, and considered wealthy. Once you saw the great stone house we lived in, Floss,—ah, such a palace of a home! But neither of you remember our noble Philip as I can."

"I just remember him," said Floss. "I recall seeing him tossing little June up—she was a very little thing then—always small, you know."

"Yes, and how he was very fond of June," and Bab patted fondly the head of her darling, *for June had crept up closer and closer.*

"I was so proud of Philip! He had great, passionate, dark eyes. I don't know why I should say passionate, though, for they were always soft and tender to me—perhaps it is thinking that sometimes they flashed when papa talked with him, for papa; loving him as dearly as he did, was very strict with poor Philip,—so strict that I have heard mamma plead for the dear boy.

"There came a time of great commercial anxiety;" continued Barbara, "and father was very anxious. His forebodings made him quite ill, and when he seemed on the point of ruin, he was saved, as he thought, by the loan of ten thousand dollars, by a very dear friend. I remember, when he received the cheque, how his face lightened up, and I thought how very handsome and noble he was, and I felt proud of him.

"'There will be no trouble now,' he said, 'I shall weather the storm;' and in the joy of his heart he kissed mother and me. He was still an invalid and sitting in his blue embroidered dressing gown before the open fire. "I love to think of that room now," continued Barbara, a glow lighting up her beautiful features. "It was almost as large as *this*, but its proportions were

so exquisite, and everything in and around it was suggestive of beauty, peace, and harmony. There were statues in the niches, and golden books upon baskets, and lovely flowers and works of art, and beautifully tinted flowers under glass shades. A soft amber glow pervaded the walls,—papa's taste had dictated all the decorations, the hanging of the pictures, the draperies—everything.

“Poor brother Philip had papa's tastes in a greater degree. He wanted to be an artist. All his longings centred there, but papa had determined that he should be a merchant. They used to have many a long talk about it when I was by, even before I was quite old enough to understand: I pitied Phil, though I never could decide whether he was in the right or not, and inclined to take his part.

“But see how I am wandering away from the sad story I began to tell you. Someway I always dreaded to think of it. As I said before, the cheque of ten thousand dollars came just at the right time, and papa was thoroughly happy. And I was delighted, too, for he seemed to me a king, who deserved to have everything he wished for.

“‘I think I will send Phil to the Bank,’ he said, looking at his watch; it just wants half an hour to closing.’ So he drew up a small stand, put his pen in the great bronze inkstand that stood there, and wrote his name across the back of the cheque.

“Mamma had gone after Philip, who was in his room. I remember what a glow of delight came over his face as father told him the amount of the cheque—oh, girls, I wish I could convey the least idea of how beautiful he was! I shall always see him as I saw him that winter’s day, —the bright coal fire burning at his right, my father so pale, yet serene and happy, and he standing there looking down at the cheque, his hat in his left hand carelessly held behind him, his splendid forehead, the clustering curls, the red lips, the singularly thoughtful expression.

“‘Phil, use all the expedition you can,’ my father said—we lived very far up town—‘if you weren’t such a rapid walker I should advise you to take a hack.’

“‘I shan’t be much over thirty minutes,’ replied Philip, taking the cheque and slowly folding it. Then he put it in his pocket-book, nodded his head, and went out.

"I flung down my bit of embroidery and followed him to the door. Oh, girls, I've been glad every moment of the time since, for I got the last kiss: he stooped down with his hand on the door-knob and kissed me twice.

"He had promised me a Maltese kitten some time before. Now he said, as he bent down, 'I've seen the very Maltese kitten that you shall have, and maybe I'll bring it home.'

"I was quite wild at that, and danced back so delighted; then I stood at the window, watching him go down the street, and—"

"Oh, Bab dear, don't cry," said June, catching at her sister's hands as they were lifted to her face. "It was dreadful, though, for you never saw him again!"

"No, dear, never again," Barbara answered, with an unsteady voice. "I went back into the room where papa sat," she added, "and mother was there with her sewing. They sat talking and laughing there like two children. The great fire of sea-coal made them both so beautiful that I just looked and listened like one entranced. How the time flew! Almost before we thought of it, the clock over the mantel struck four. Papa started, looked grave, and took out his watch.

“‘I hope Phil got there in time;’ he said; ‘he has been gone nearly two hours.’

“‘We must expect him every moment,’ mamma said quietly.

“Yes, but with ten thousand dollars about him, he ought not to loiter,’ papa responded.

“Another quarter went. Papa got up and walked backward and forward, something he could not have done in his weak state if he had not been much excited. Mamma and I watched the clock, and listened to every motion. Then papa went out in the hall, opened the front door, stood on the steps bare-headed in the bitter cold, though mother begged him not to expose himself so.

“Five o’clock, six came, and we could bear it no longer. Papa got a carriage and drove to the house of the cashier.

“It was found that the money had been paid, They sent a messenger to the bank, and there were the entry and the cheque. It had been paid. Oh, girls, that was a dreadful night, I hope never to spend such another. Papa flying all over the city, perfectly desperate; mamma so frightened that she lay in hysterics, and we had to have a doctor called. I was up till the clock

struck two, trying to comfort her, but all to no purpose. The next day passed, and the next, without tidings. Poor papa was ruined financially, and he had the aggravating consciousness of knowing that the matter was talked of all over town. Everybody, almost, thought that Philip, our dear, noble Phil, had run away with the money,—that dear, noble boy; even father declared that his own son had ruined him.

“But where was he? had his life been spared? The city was searched, detectives employed, but not the slightest trace of our poor Philip could be found. Then came such days and weeks! Both papa and mamma were very ill; you girls were taken out to nurse Townley, and I was allowed to stay at home because I was quiet and could care for mamma. At last the sick ones recovered, and moved round the house like ghosts, and mamma wept and murmured night and day for her beautiful Philip.”

“I think he must have looked like you,” said June, in a transport of admiration, for Barbara’s cheeks were flushed and her eyes shining, while her lips glowed like corals.

“No, dear, I never was half as beautiful as Philip,” said Barbara, softly.

"But, darling Bab," and June was clasping and patting the hand which she had kept in her own ever since she had caught them from her sister's face, "where did he go? Why did he never come back? What do you think?"

"What did I think?" Barbara repeated slowly, a quick flash in her glance. "I thought then, think now, and ever shall think, that our poor boy was murmured."

June shrank closer to her sister's knee. Florence uttered a cry, "Oh, how terrible!"

"It seems as if we had passed through so much trouble," mused Barbara, in the suppressed voice that denoted how deeply her heart was stirred. "After that, before either papa or mamma were quite recovered, the red flag hung from our windows, and our beautiful home, with everything it contained, was sold at auction. Then, within the same year, while no tidings came of Philip, grandfather died of paralysis. Papa could not be with him, for he was working night and day to pay that ten thousand dollars back, and when the will was read, what was his astonishment to learn that every cent was left to Uncle Harper Bennet, who was rich enough already, and who is to-day a millionaire. Poor,

poor papa! I know Uncle Harper Bennet has done some fearful wrong," she said, passionately, her voice changing. "Grandpa Harper loved us all, but papa was his favourite, and he always promised to do well by him. If we could only have had the farm and nothing else—Uncle Harper was rich enough without it. They have found coals on it, and minerals, and he is making money fast. Sometimes I almost hate him," she added, with angry vehemence.

"O Bab, darling," said June, in a voice troubled and low, "the Bible says that's murder, if we hate any one in our hearts."

"I know it, darling, and I'm sure the Bible is right," Barbara answered quietly, "and I have to pray with all my might when such thoughts come to me. Yes, I believe hate is very nearly like murder, God help us all not to cherish it."

"But Uncle Harper paid for your education, Bab, darling," said Florence, admiring the tall, slender figure, as Barbara rose and walked back and forth, "and to such a splendid school! I wish I could go."

"Yes, I know," Barbara responded, speaking rapidly, "he sent me to school, where my tastes were cultivated, clothed me handsomely for years,

until he married his new wife. Floss, dear, wouldn't it have been better if he had left me alone? for oh, to come back here to such poverty! What good do my French and German do now? or my music, though they call me exceptional as a performer. Of course I get some admiration, and I am flattered, but I see they think all the time that it's 'only *that* poor Barbara Bennet,' and then they talk of what is going on here, and wonder and surmise."

"Bab, dear, you are too sensitive, and it makes you bitter," said June, tearfully.

"I know it's wrong," and Barbara shook herself a little spitefully. "Something pricks my heart when I get in this wicked mood, but it isn't for myself I feel so, but for you and June, mamma and poor papa. And then to feel that we barely exist on the pittance doled out by Uncle Harper, who is living on what justly belongs to us. There's no use, girls, mother must let me go somewhere, to some city, and find a place as a teacher. I know I am quite competent—and I shall never do anything here."

"But the money to take you there and keep you while you are there?" said Floss.

"We could hunt up some of our rich rela-

tions," said Barbara, with a strangely scornful laugh, "no doubt they would be glad to take care of me."

"Now, Barbara, we don't know how good and kind they may be in their hearts," said ever-merciful June, "but then we can't spare you, and mamma cries every time you speak of it. While we are all together, dear, what does it matter if we are poor? Hark!" she added, and Florence echoed the word. The front gate shut to with a clang. There was the sound of many feet on the gravel walk outside.





CHAPTER IV.

POSING FOR THE TABLEAUX.

"I want you to take a picture, sir, of my old woman and me;
Just as we be, if you please, sir, gray hairs and all."

A MERRY crew burst into the room when Barbara answered to the loud rap on the outside door, a swarm of blue, scarlet, and white-robed beauties, eyes sparkling under their jaunty hats, white teeth showing through careless, ringing laughter, and the bubbling up of light-hearted, effervescent conversation.

Floss lighted another candle, and her fingers trembled a little.

"I'm as good as any of them," she thought, to brace herself mentally, "if the house is an old rookery. I do wish Bab wouldn't talk so."

Barbara was in the middle of the throng, surrounded on this side and that by the well-

grown boys who had formed the escort for the merry school-girls.

"Bab, it's just the thing!" cried Kate Hanson, as she surveyed the dimensions of the room. "Better than any hall possibly could be. It was the dining-room, wasn't it? Papa says he remembers when this was a famous hotel. He knows a story about it, where a very old man and a little child were killed up-stairs in one of the bed-rooms—but I suppose you've heard of that. We must get the curtain made. I'm glad there's so little furniture—at least," she added, reddening as she caught Barbara's eye, "so large a room never shows to advantage if it is crowded with chairs and tables. It's the curtain I'm most afraid of. Gannet Dawes is to manage that. I guess it will run smoothly—any hitch in the machinery would spoil the whole thing. We've sold a hundred tickets, and I guess the room would hold more. Bab, won't you play for us? that's a dear. There's a piano here, and you are such a superb performer!"

"The piano is very old, you know," she said.

"No matter for that—your touch would make it young again," responded the girl, volubly. "And could you give us more light? We might

as well practise a little. Now there's June; she's such a little thing, she'll make a capital Eva; and you, Floss, must black your face for Topsy, and I'll give you some curled hair for a wig. Oh, won't it be too ridiculous?"

"What shall I black my face with?" queried Florence, entering into the sport with great relish. It was a luxury to be with girls of her own age, and her temperament craved excitement. She never, like the more unimpressible Barbara, stood upon her dignity, and in consequence she was better liked by the majority of her school-fellows.

"Oh! burnt cork; that's as good as anything."

"Who's to be Queen Elizabeth?" asked Florence.

"Belle Savage. We wanted Barbara, but she's not blonde enough; besides, she's too handsome. Elizabeth wasn't a beauty, you know. Belle has rather an aristocratic appearance,—don't you think so?"

"Not more than our Bab," said Floss, proudly; "however, Belle is a good choice."

"Exactly. And she expects it, rather. She can get a splendid costume, too, her father is so rich,—and he would do anything for us. Of

course we couldn't find costumes for these splendid characters, and we don't want anything mean."

In a moment Bab's spirit flashed through Florence's eyes.

"It won't cost much to get up *our* costumes," she said, quietly.

"No, and that's a great deal the best where you can wear common things and have no fuss and trouble. The expense of some of the costumes will be considerable. There's no one I know who could take Topsy like you, or Cassy as well as Barbara, if she only will. But she's so distant I'm afraid to ask her. Do you think she would?"

Florence was conciliated.

"She can't play the piano for you and take part in the tableaux."

"Oh, yes she can. Sam Waters will play while Uncle Tom's Cabin is on. If there's no failure, I expect we shall have a nice time. Where is Cleopatra?"

A tall brunette appeared, was put into position and duly instructed, after which she went meekly back into the crowd.

"Queen Elizabeth! Raleigh!" read Lawrence

Blake from a paper he held. Belle Savage came forward with a handsome shawl in her hand. She was a tall, delicate-looking girl, wearing a profusion of pale, yellow ringlets. Raleigh assumed the proper attitude, throwing his cloak, for which the shawl did duty, at the feet of Elizabeth, who did her best to look stately.

"Mozart and his pupils!" called the reader.

"Here is his worshipful presence," responded Joe Hastings, an overgrown youth of seventeen.

"Fancy that your costume," laughed one of the girls, throwing a long blue scarf over his shoulder.

"Jule Nanen, you are his favourite pupil. You must wear white, as stylish as you please; white satin if you can get it, and powder on your hair. Fancy what a time we have had trying to get a harp," she continued, turning to Barbara, who stood looking on with a quiet smile, and pre-occupied face; "we went everywhere, till Belle told the judge, and he said he would send one from the city. Wasn't he kind? That's why we want to get Belle into as many as we can. He's so proud of Belle!"

"And so rich," responded Barbara, her voice falling.

Barbara was by no means an angel. I am

afraid she was not even a model young lady. Her heart was full of bitterness sometimes, young as she was, and her battles with self yet lay before her, all to be sharply fought again and again, before there was any possibility of conquest over the undisciplined nature. She felt herself, as she stood there, infinitely superior to them all; conscious of powers unfolded, conscious of ability to dare and do what others might shrink from through weakness or incapacity. She looked on Belle Savage with pitying condescension, and yet envied her because she was so surrounded with all that could minister to their wants and desires.

"Belle thinks of nothing but self, and craves admiration," she soliloquised, with some contempt. "I suppose she prides herself upon the fact that her father is the richest man in town."

Barbara was ungenerous, though she did not know it. She was not vain, either of her beauty or her gifts, but her mind had been warped through the unconscious influence of surrounding circumstances. She never once thought, as Belle took the several characters, "I should do better in that," or "I am handsomer than she is." She accepted admiration when it was sin-

cere, as the flowers accept dew, naturally and gladly: but flattery she loathed. She was equally frank to say what pleased her, and to commend the merits she appreciated in others; but the troubles she had encountered so early in life had somewhat soured her naturally sweet and liberal nature. And it was equally true of Belle that she did not seek the good wishes of others. If apparently she was a little exacting at times, there was this to excuse her: she had known no wish ungratified since her birth; and the only wonder was that, being an only child, she was not spoiled.

"There! that's over," said the leading spirit, after Topsy, Uncle Tom, Aunt 'Phelia, and Cassy had been successfully posed. "And if you all do as well as you have done to-night, I shall be thoroughly satisfied. Of course they must; the costumes, music, and audience will inspire them. Barbara, the last is always the best, you know."

"Is it? I thought the spectators generally got tired out at the close, and so it didn't much matter. I'm sure I do."

"Not a bit of it. Your music will end all up exquisitely. Nobody plays like you, and you know it. We can't spare a note of your music."

"Thank you," said Bab, drily.

"You have extraordinary talent—everybody knows it. Why don't you take up music as a profession? I'm sure you might become famous."

Barbara's eyes flashed.

"I don't think I care to become famous," she said, determined to be cool and calm under what was to her an infliction hard to be borne. Why should these girls patronise her? They never met her without speaking of her talents. If she was poor and lived in a barn she did not want to be continually reminded that they knew all about it, and pitied her. Poor Barbara did not keep her composure long. In the midst of that pretty babble, that human chirping which usually follows the gathering of excitable and voluble young girls, just as their merriment was at its height, that terrible cry—the cry of a soul struggling into consciousness—rang through the house for the second time that evening—a cry that would have chilled the warmest blood.

"What's that?" said Belle Savage turning white and faint. "Bab, what terrible noise was that?" one and another questioned, as they stood there white and horror-stricken.

Barbara was pale, tearless, and quite calm, but

she spoke not a word. Her lips seemed frozen together. One or two of the boys attempted a joke, but the majority of the company were really frightened, and hurried to the door. Florence hid her face, for she was crying bitterly. June's soft beseeching eyes were fixed on Barbara's face as she whispered:—

"Tell them, dear, tell them its poor papa, and there's nothing to be afraid of."

Silently the girls went out, shuddering; only one came back. Barbara felt her hands clasped hard, and, looking up, there stood Bell Savage, her thin, usually colourless face flushed with the fine tints of sympathy. Then she bent and kissed Bab on the forehead. She said not a word, but in that supreme moment of her wretchedness, Barbara could have worshipped her.

Out into the moon-lighted evening tripped the hurried feet; lively tongues made all sorts of comments upon the strange interruption they had experienced.

"Is it her father? I heard he was crazy," said one. "There's no knowing what wild maniac they've got there; its as much as one's life is worth to go to that horrid barn of a place."

"Such a mystery about the family," whispered

another ; they're so poor and so proud. For my part I dislike to go near people who are poor and yet try to be somebody. You never see them in society. They always look respectable enough, but neither Mrs. Bennet or Barbara ever go to church, and people are heathen who never go to church."

"Maybe they can't pay for seats," said someone.

"Anybody could do that—just for two—or Barbara might come into the Sabbath-school as a teacher, as the others do, and sit with her class. Oh, what an awful sound it was! it makes my blood curdle even now. I don't think I shall ever dare go there again. As to having the tableaux in the house, its quite out of the question."

"The place is haunted, that's the amount of the matter," said Ganett Dawes, coming round to the side of Belle Savage. "I noticed you went back again. Did you see anything?"

"Yes, I saw something," said, Belle, curtly. "I wouldn't have hurt her feelings so for a thousand worlds."

"Do you mean Miss Barbara? She's a splendid girl. It's a great pity she is placed as she is; it's a fact that poor people are awfully touchy."

"Are they?" queried Belle, pointedly. Gannett Dawes was by no means the scion of a wealthy house, though he made great pretensions. Belle's response kept him silent after that.

"What was the noise?" asked Anne South of Belle; "is there a wild beast there?"

"You know better. It is her father. He suffered some great shock, I have heard, that affected his brain and his muscles. He is quite harmless, and almost helpless; but once in a great while, in his frenzied efforts to express himself, he utters such cries; and unfortunately he did so to-night. Poor Barbara! I pity her, she is so beautiful and high-spirited!"

"It is dreadful," said another commiserating voice. "But I have heard that Barbara is really a genius. If so, she ought to turn her gifts to some account. I wouldn't stay cooped up there if I had such splendid talents. Nobody plays like her, not even Professor Gobherd. But what about the tableaux? I thought they were all fixed."

"It's very certain we can't have them there," said Kate Hanson, turning sharply round. "I'm scared out of a year's growth. I'm sure I shall

dream of mad-houses all night long. It wasn't quite settled, you know, that we could have it, so we will secure the hall at the corner. It's a horrible place, right over that shop, but there's no better. I wonder they allowed us to come—the Bennets—I should think they would have more self-respect!"

"I'm sure you begged them hard enough," said Belle Savage, sharply.

"Yes, but who dreamed there was a raving maniac in the house? It's as much as our lives are worth to go there."

"They seem to live along pretty easily," retorted Belle.





CHAPTER V.

COMFORTING BARBARA.

"The wild delights of circling ties,
The cloudless glow of open truth,
The thousand darling witcheries,
That gild the enchanted years of youth."

BARBARA never moved after the thoughtless party had gone. Florence had both arms about her, coaxing her.

"Dear, dear Bab, don't keep so still—don't look so heart-broken. There's a great streak of moonshine falling on your head and clear down to your feet. I don't like the colour it gives you. After all, who cares? and who are they, anyway?"

Barbara shivered and groaned. Then she turned slowly and threw her arms over her sister's neck, as she moaned:

"It's very hard to bear. I dare say I'm wicked, and merit the whole of it. If it was

only the poverty, Floss! But this, too! It's awful, Florence."

"Never mind, dear—don't mind it, please, for my sake, because you frighten me when you look so."

"How do I look, Floss?"

"Oh, I can't describe it; so white and rigid, like a piece of marble. You're worth the whole of them, dear, with all your beauty and your gifts, and they know it."

"No, dear, worth nothing, utterly nothing. If I were, I'd soon better my condition, and make you all happier. I have read of girls younger than I am who have done so. Why won't Providence put something into my way which I can turn into use and value? Even my face is against me. Mother won't let me go into the mills or the shops; just as if I couldn't take care of myself!" she added, bitterly.

"O Bab, darling, we couldn't one of us let you go into the mill or the shop—it would kill us. Don't talk that way; I think mother is right."

"Whose pride is it now that keeps us paupers? Why shouldn't I go?"

"We are not paupers, Barbara."

"Yes we are—accepting a pitiful charity from Uncle Harper, who is rioting on our substance."

"Maybe not, Bab. I hope not."

"But he is, and I know I shall tell him so. I'll write him a letter this very night, and ask him for some money. We are getting into debt, Floss, poorly as we live; and it frightens me to think about it; and then that frightful thing breaking out again!"

"You mean poor .papa," said Florence, in tearful, pathetic tones, "poor, poor papa!"

"I know it is terrible for him, but it is looked upon as a sort of disgrace,—much as if he drank and had delirium tremens."

"O Bab, how can you say such hard things! You're not a bit like yourself," she added sorrowfully.

Barbara burst into tears.

"I know it, Floss. I wish I was a Christian. I wish this pride could be cut up by the roots out of my heart. I'm a weak, proud, passionate girl, not fit to be the elder sister of either of you, but I do so long to lift you out of this miserable slough of poverty. What shall we ever be, dear? and we are growing into young ladies. I'm sure I haven't a decent frock like

other girls. Mother is just wasting away before our eyes, and I am powerless to help!"

June and Florence vied with loving protestations in comforting her, and when at her request they left her alone, she sat down to the table, and, taking from her much-worn case her writing materials, she wrote the story of their wants in burning language, with the tears running down her cheeks.

"I wouldn't write Uncle Harper a line," she murmured half-fiercely, "if I didn't feel that he had wronged us cruelly."

After sealing her letter she walked the length of the shadowy room, and looked out of the window. The calm and majesty of night seemed to have fallen upon all the inanimate things without.

"After all, God made the world beautiful," she said, softly, "and I don't suppose He wants us to be miserable for any good it may bring. If we could only bear the trouble and still say, 'It is right,' that would be the way to turn it to account. Oh, I wish I could, but I can't!

"Is it can't or won't, I wonder?" she went on, her lip quivering. "I'm afraid it's won't. *I am sure* He will give me strength if I have

any particular work to do, and how much better to look back and say I have tried to bear my lot patiently.

"O God, Thou who seemest so far off," she said, lifting clasped hands as she gazed into the clear, solemn sky, "help me to be a better girl. Take from my heart envy and all uncharitableness, and make me a true elder sister, that I may be a help to those who look up to me."

The prayer went up from the very depths of her heart; it was an honest prayer, and God heard it, not by sending visible angels, but by shedding into her soul invisible strength. The clouds seemed to clear away. The darkness became light. Many a little comforting word that she had heard came to strengthen her. The troubles seemed to dissolve. She wondered that she had harboured such rebellious thoughts. What would we do without the ever-present God—without the Holy Spirit, the Comforter? Where should we go, when the thorns pierce our very hearts, if there were no blessed Jesus?

"There! He has heard me," Barbara said, solemnly, "and He will help me to bear patiently, because I should—not bitterly, because I must."



CHAPTER VI

THE WALK.

"I cannot always trace the way
Where Thou, Almighty One! dost move,
But I can always, always say
That God is love."

THE next day sunshine reigned without and within, only Floss was attacked with what she called one of her restless fits.

The morning's work was all done up, the room partly shaded, and Floss and June sat down to their sewing.

"I don't want to look at a needle," said Floss, pettishly. "June, what do you suppose ails me? You look so provokingly placid. You always do when I am cross."

"You're not cross, dear," June said, smiling.

"I *am* cross—at least I feel as if I should be on the slightest provocation, so don't look at me. Wouldn't it be lovely to go into the woods?"

"Yes it would," responded June.

"And just lie down on the soft pine carpet and listen to the wind-voices in the trees, while the dear little birds would come hopping round, near enough for one to touch if they would keep still enough. Who is that on the road? Tilly Gray, isn't it? Yes, I know her walk and her drab suit."

Tilly Gray was the most intimate friend Florence had,—a sweet, good-natured girl, with the remarkable gift of making all those who came within her sphere happy. Floss threw the shutter wider open as the smiling face nodded, then Tilly Gray turned from the road and came towards the window.

"Where are you going?" asked Florence, a new light in her eyes, as she caught the infection of Tilly's merry laugh.

"A two-miles walk," Tilly answered. "You know I have spoken of Betty Lawson?"

"The woman who made such remarkable doughnuts—yes."

"The same one—she lived with mother over ten years; I guess she wishes she never had left her, poor thing. She was married from our house, and she and her husband went to New

York. Aleck Brady was the fortunate man, but it seems they have been full of trouble the past year, and she has moved back here to a place called the Long Cut, by the factories, where her husband has obtained work on the new railroad.

"I'm afraid the husband she married, because 'he wor such a beauty, 'm,' as she told mother, is a very shiftless fellow. Mother didn't like him from the first, and told her he was too young for her, but Betty was determined. I loved the poor girl dearly, she was always a kind old Betty to me."

"Do you know where it is?" asked Floss.

"Yes, indeed. I've been there to pick berries many a time, a wild and beautiful place, and not spoiled yet by the factories. There are but few settlers there as yet. I am sure I can find her. Poor thing! she had to sell everything in New York. When she was married she had saved up nearly five hundred dollars, and she furnished two or three nice rooms, and it quite broke her heart to sell the furniture, she says, and break up her home. I believe her. You ought to see her letter; I wish I had it with me, it is a curiosity."

"I wish you wanted company," said Floss. "I'm just in the mood to take a tramp."

"Indeed, there's nothing I should like better," and Tilly's face grew brighter still. "Can't you both go?"

"Can we?" asked Florence, looking at Barbara, who had come to the window.

"I don't know about June," said Barbara, "so long a walk would fatigue her too much, but it would do you good. Go along."

"It would not hurt me a bit," said June briskly, her beautiful eyes shining. "I have walked two miles many a time."

"Then go, darling—get ready, both of you; I will put you up a lunch, or you will set Miss Betty crazy—so many of you at once—only be sure and come home early."

"Yes," said June, "we'll try to meet with an adventure so as to have something to write about." How little did she guess, as she spoke the words so lightly, what that adventure would be!

"Maybe," laughed Florence, as the sisters made their appearance quite ready, "she will have some of her famous doughnuts on hand."

"Poor thing," responded Tilly, "I'm afraid she don't often make doughnuts now. Papa heard that Aleck was very intemperate. I rather

think poor Betty would like to come back with us, though I've no doubt she loves her husband better than ever. Those Irish are so queer, a beating now and then don't make much odds."

Once out of town and by themselves, the spirits of the little party rose. They sauntered or they ran. They sat down on mossy roadsides, drank from purling streams—curled oak leaves for their cups, clambered over rocks, took by-paths through the woods, and at last came upon the railroad-track, over which passenger trains passed only twice a day.

"We can shorten the remaining mile a good deal, girls, if we walk by the side of the track," said Tilly. Florence was afraid; June thought it would be fun.

"There's nothing in the world to fear," said adventurous Tilly. "The train won't be along for hours, it's the pokiest old thing! and we ought to walk it in less than an hour. It's only a mile to Long Cut, and if the trains should come there's no real danger, there's plenty of room at the sides of the track, and the road is so straight and nice!"

"If you are sure about the train coming," said

Floss, "it would be good fun. I never walked so near a track in my life."

"I am sure, of course I am," said Tilly, confidently. "I've often been with papa."

On they went gaily after that, all fear forgotten, sometimes walking on the cross-ties, sometimes trying how near they could stand at the edge of the road where the track almost covered it, at others, moving by the side of grassy paths, and passing rude ungarnished country homes. At last, as was to be expected, they were tired. A great boulder stood at the road-side, in which were broad indentations that served for seats.

"I almost wish we hadn't come on the track," said June, "it's so lonesome, never a soul in sight."

"Nonsense," laughed Tilly who had climbed to the very top of the rock, "we are almost there now, and can soon rest and refresh ourselves. Poor old Betty will be so delighted that we thought of her, and I do so want to see her baby."

"Oh, you don't say she's got a baby!" said June, "that's delightful; we don't see such a thing at our house in an age. Sometimes we

walk all the way over to nurse Townley's just to see her daughter's little girl, not two years old yet, and such a darling! Her cheeks are as fat and red, and her eyes as blue and sparkling! oh, I do think little babies are heavenly?"

"June is wild over babies," laughed Florence; "I like pretty ones, but—what's the matter, Tilly?"

Tilly gave a great cry, then held both hands tightly over her eyes, and sat there shaking from head to foot.

"Oh, girls, come and see—no, don't go—" but Florence had already run round to the rear of the rock.

"What is it? what shall we do?" cried June, in a scared voice, while Florence was creeping round, taking slow steps—and then something fixed her vision—something so awful that she neither stirred or cried out, but stood a little bent forward like an image.

On the other side of the rock lay a man, dead, and dreadfully disfigured.

"He can't harm us," whispered Tilly, in a hoarse voice, "don't be frightened—but oh, girls, isn't it awful? What can it mean?"

"Don't stand there! don't look!" cried June,

who held on to the rock to keep herself from falling, for she felt faint and sick.

"Florence, come here, I've got something to tell you," and Tilly had come down and now took hold of her hand to draw her away. "Oh, Floss," she sobbed, "poor, poor Betty! it's Aleck, it's Betty's husband. Oh, how do you suppose he came to his death?"

"It was done in the night, maybe, he was on the track," said Florence, recovering her voice as she turned away from the first great shock that had ever thrilled her; "caught by the train and thrown on the rock."

"Yes, or while he was drunk, perhaps he tried to jump off."

"Maybe he was murdered," said June.

At that there was a cry of horror. The three girls sprang from the spot and ran breathlessly forward, pausing only when they came in sight of a cluster of small frame houses. There was a gorge filled with rich shades of colour beyond, then fair meadows, and further on majestic hills clothed to the summits in living green, loose heaps of splendid tints in the shape of rocks and mounds, the latter filled with red and yellow wild flowers and white clover. Overhead the

birds twittered and sang; all the air was full of the perfume of summer, but to these frightened girls the landscape might as well have been clothed in black. The pleasure of their ramble had vanished. Eyes, thoughts, and hearts were filled with one image, and how to break the news to poor Betty they could not tell. Suddenly Tilly stopped, her face and voice full of consternation.

“There she is sitting in the door-way, knitting! see that little place with the vines running over it; and she’s got the kitten in her lap. I guess it’s the same one she took from our house, poor soul! Mother told her she would throw Kitty in, among some other things she gave her for housekeeping. ‘Indade,’ said Betty, laughing and crying, ‘it wouldn’t seem home widout a cat.’ Poor Betty! see, she is looking at us; I think she recognises me. Girls, we must not tell her of it, just yet; let’s get time to think. She’s not a bit like the rosy-cheeked girl she was.”

Betty had seen them. The quick motion of arms and fingers had given place to a dropping of the hands. Then her cheeks flushed redly. She rose up hurriedly, with an anxious face, yet smiling, and came forward.

"I 'most knowed t'was Miss Tilly," she said, her eyes bright with smiles and tears; "and you've growed, too—growed beautifully—well, if I ever!"

"Oh, Betty," cried Tilly, thoroughly overcome, laughing almost hysterically, "it's so nice to see you!" and, still nervous and frightened, she burst into tears, as she ran impulsively forward and kissed her.

"Sure, and I hope there's nothing happened at home?" asked Betty, anxiously. "Why, what ails the child?"

"Nothing a bit the matter at home, only I'm tired; we've walked the whole way, Betty,—and you see, we came on the track, and—and—" here she came near giving way again, "and we're all so hungry, dear, good Betty. Do take our baskets and set your table, won't you?—we knew you wouldn't be prepared, and so brought lunch along.—And where's the baby?"

Betty was bewildered, but delighted.

"I'm sure I'm honoured," she said, in a quiet way, "but the cabin's a poor one, and it's not what you've been used to."

"Never mind the cabin, Betty, if you've only got a chair apiece for us."

Floss and June were very pale. It seemed to strike her suddenly that they were tired.

"Why, true for ye; ye must 'ave walked your legs off, poor things!" she said, turning to lead the trio in, while they all exchanged expressive glances. It was so sad to watch simple-hearted Betty, and then to think of what was lying out there in the road.

The little box was neat and clean, though it could boast of but scant furnishing, and there was no room to spare. Three or four chairs, a table, a stool or two, flowers in the windows growing in cups, and pieces of broken crockery. Beyond, an open door disclosed another room, where stood a low bedstead covered with white. On the pillow lay the baby, a really beautiful child, with a forehead as white as snow, and cheeks that rivalled blush roses, while the damp moist curls hung down almost to his pretty dimpled shoulders.

"Oh, what a lovely boy!" exclaimed June—on her knees beside him in a moment, that the tears in her eyes might not be noticed.

"The very picture of his father," said Betty, with a sad and yet exultant smile, "not a feature of *me* own, except it's the hand and fut.

They're uncommonly large—the darlin't. Ah, Miss, ye'd say so if ye could see Aleck."

What a thrill ran through their veins! If they could see Aleck—ah! if she knew, poor soul!

The cat, all this time, sat composedly by the fire-place, purring, and evidently as much pleased as her mistress to see visitors.

"I've a bit fire beyant," said Betty, "where I've had me stove put—it'll not take me a minute to make some tay."

"It's too hot for tea, can't we get some milk, Betty?" asked Tilly.

"Plenty of it, for we keep a cow, ye see—I bought it out of the lavin's of the furniture. And it's wontherin' I am that Aleck didn't come back last night." Well for Betty that she was walking busily back and forth, in and out, or she would surely have noticed that something was amiss.

The table was set, and very neat and nice was the display on Betty's snowy table-cloth.

"I thought it's hungry ye was," said the woman, as she poured the milk a second time into the mug and glasses, for try as hard as they would to be merry, there was no joy in that

meal. Tilly was trying to explain, when the train shot by, and they all ran to the door to see.

"Where do passengers get out?" asked Floss.

"Oh, a bit below here, ye might 'ave seen a quare little bit of a place," and then she craned her neck, and her eyes seemed starting from their sockets, as she cried out:

"There, if the train hasn't brought the double of me own twin brother, whose face I've not set eyes on for these seventeen long years."

The man, short and stout, and dressed in the inevitable corduroys, a bundle swung over his shoulder from a stout stick, was coming directly to the house. Betty gave another shout that sounded like a war-whoop, and presently the brother and sister were crying and kissing in each other's arms.

"Ah, Betty, me jewel, it's come to bring ye good luck I am. The ould uncle at Ballymacoolle is dead—heaven rest his soul—and he's left us two hunner pund apiece, so I thought I'd come to the free country and live with the sister that's been the twin of me since I was born," he added, with a queer little bow all around.

"This is better than any story I ever read,"

said Florence, softly. "What a wonderful providence!"

The time passed swiftly. Betty was nearly beside herself with joy, and her Irish accent came out in full force, as she talked of home and kindred. It was pitiful to hear her speak of Aleck, while her eye kindled and her smiles broadened, albeit there was a shadow over all—and one could see that handsome, jovial Aleck was not the man she had married him for. The girls prepared to go, but Tilly, being spokeswoman, said she felt afraid to return alone, at least as far as the turnpike.

"It's meself'll see you that far," said Dennis, gallantly, though awkwardly enough. Tilly, as calmly as she could, consented. They took the public road on their way home, followed by Betty's blessings, and the good creature stood in the door looking after them, her cheeks crimson, her eyes shining.

It is almost needless to tell the rest, how Tilly, with another burst of tears, disclosed to the young Irishman what they had seen, and what it was. Great was his astonishment and bewilderment; grief he had none, save for his sister.

"It's meself'll take care of her, anyhow," were the last words he said.

Florence thought it would be many a long day before she should want another ramble. June went to her room on returning, and hardly left it for the next twenty-four hours. Tilly ran down towards night to tell all she had heard. It was not known how Aleck came to his death, but poor Betty was inconsolable. Her father, she said, had seen Dennis, who intended to find work at his trade, shoemaking, and take Betty into a house of his own, if he could raise one, somewhere in the suburbs.





CHAPTER VII

WASHING-DAY.

"And out in the green fields 'twas ours to repair,
When bright was the blue sky and fresh was the air."

"**S**OME Florence," said Barbara, cheerily, one morning; "wake up, washing to-day!"

"I've been awake a long time," said Floss, opening her eyes, and smiling up into Barbara's happy face. "What a blessing there's a spring so near the kitchen door! I'm sure the old house isn't so very bad, and I don't believe it's haunted."

"Haunted, nonsense!"

"Why, don't you believe such a thing possible?" asked Floss, sitting up in bed.

"I don't know what may be possible," Barbara said, "but *I* have nothing to do with such things. I banish them from my mind, just the same as I would keep off any temptation."

Christian people know that God is present always, and He will save us from all harm if we trust in Him."

"Bab, are you getting pious?" asked Florence, pausing in the act of combing out her hair.

"I hope I am," was Barbara's low reply.

"Why, you haven't heard any sermons lately."

"Havn't I? I'm hearing sermons all the time, lately. And I'm beginning to think I must put by my pride and go to church in my old bonnet."

"Do, Bab; you look prettier in your old bonnet than all the rest in new ones," said Floss impulsively.

"Nonsense, you flatterer," laughed Barbara.

"It isn't flattery—what everybody says, isn't flattery—why, the compliments I hear of you would fill a—a—bushel basket."

"We'll put them in the clothes basket to-day, dear," said Barbara, blushing. "Why, June, you up, too?"

"Of course I am—going to get breakfast, all by myself; you needn't say no, for I will. You will have all you can do to carry water—there's where we want a brother," she added—"it was a great mistake, my being a girl. Isn't it lovely this morning? Just feel the air at this window.

It blows rose-breaths into your face. And the currants are ripe, oceans of them. Do you know what I'm thinking of? I am going to pick and sell them at the shop."

"Why, June, what a bright idea!" exclaimed Florence, looking at her between long strings of brown hair.

"Of course," laughed June, "all the bright ideas come out of my brain. I've been keeping it, seeing that neither of you thought of it. I'm going to see if Snowbird's chicks are out this morning."

Another moment, and after splashing in the water, and rubbing her cheeks rose-red, she went out into the wide hall, and there, sure enough, the first to welcome her was Snowbird, with almost a dozen fluttering downy yellow balls of chicks at her feet. June was half-wild at the sight, and fed Snowbird, the pretty white hen, as she talked, and laughed, and called the girls alternately.

"I'm just as happy as I can be, everything seems to come out right," she said, going into the great room, apron and arms full of resinous pine splinters.

Barbara smiled as she heard her. All the old,

envious, hard feelings towards her Uncle Harper's family seemed to have vanished. She and Florence kindled a fire in the broken old stove in the shed, which they called by courtesy a kitchen.

Mrs. Bennett seldom came down early, being frequently broken of her rest. When she made her appearance both Barbara and Florence were up to their elbows in the suds, and the washing was progressing very finely.

"My dear," said Mrs. Bennett, as Barbara ran out with a batch of pillow-cases. Barbara looked up astonished at her mother's beaming face.

"He is quite himself, this morning; the first time for months."

"Oh, dear, dear mamma!" and Barbara looked radiant.

"You know what the doctor said; there would be rapid recovery from the moment he gained possession of all his faculties. He moved his right hand this morning, he took hold of mine;" the tears were in her eyes. As for Barbara, she thought of her heartfelt prayers of late, and her soul was full of gratitude. Her expressions of delight were suddenly modified by the entrance

of a small, bent body, in a blue gingham dress and a small quaker bonnet of drab silk. On her arm hung a moderately large wicker basket.

"Nurse Townley!" cried Bab, throwing her burden down, her face glowing with pleasure; "where did you drop from?"

"Not from the clouds," said the cheerful little woman, depositing the basket on a table, and moving into the large dining-room, followed by Barbara and Florence.

"Just go and empty the basket, my dear," said nurse to Floss; "there are a few trifles in it;" then she sat down, while Barbara untied her bonnet, and June, who had come in delighted, unpinned her shawl.

"I have taken thee from thy work, children," said the old lady; "and I knew it was wash-day, too. Just let me sit alone and knit, while thee goes on just as if I were not here. The Spirit moved me this morning, because of a dream I dreamed. Thee must not laugh at me. I am not one of the superstitious kind, thee knows. Well, the coach passed by at six this morning, and here I am."

She sent them all to their tasks. June and Florence took out the "trifles"—two dozen fresh

eggs, two chickens ready for the oven, which showed that the kind old woman must have risen before day-break, and a leaf basket on top, full of magnificent berries, plucked in the dew.

What a pleasant day it was! A hundred times Barbara decided that, after all, it was best to look on the pleasant side of things and trust. By three in the afternoon all the work was done, the sweet, fresh clothes folded, ready for ironing, and Barbara donned her best dress, a pretty white muslin, in honour of nurse Townley's visit. In the prosperous times, all the children had been in charge of this good woman. Even after she had a family of her own, she still superintended their nursery, and the children loved her almost like a second mother.

"And does thee get more used to this lonesome place?" asked nurse Townley, folding her hands and leaning back, as her blue eyes rested on Barbara's glowing countenance.

Barbara sighed, then smiled.

"It *is* lonesome, nurse, but I am striving to be contented."

"Then thee will be, if thee strives in the right way," said nurse. "Thee knows who it was that

said, 'Come unto me, all who labour and are heavy laden.' Does thee go to Him, dear?"

"Yes, nurse, often," said Barbara simply.

"That is well, and thee is safe," was the smiling response. June came in and led them triumphantly out to tea, over which, for the first time in many weeks, Mrs. Bennett presided. They had the strawberries and fresh, sweet cream. Mr. Bennett seemed to be still improving, his wife said, and the spirits of the little family were proportionately high. Nurse consented to share their hospitality for one night, and as she sat there after tea, her little prim figure so fittingly garbed, the white hair still curling under the front of her well-starched cap, June at her feet, and Barbara, in her superb beauty, at her side, a brighter or sweeter picture could not be found.

"Does thee not think it strange, dear," said nurse, addressing Barbara, "that I have dreamed of thy grandfather, three nights running?"

Bab was silent. At that mention, she felt the old bitter thoughts stirring again.

"Grandpapa was unjust," she said in a low voice.

"I don't think he meant to be, deary."

"I hope not," responded Barbara, doubtingly.

"Does thee remember the old clock that stood in his room when he died?"

"Yes, indeed," June spoke up, "we've got that clock now; it's in my room, because it don't go; hasn't for this long while; and it's pretty, so they let me have it." Nurse Townley was silent for a few moments.

"Thee knows my son Dan'l was a clock-maker by trade, and I learned something of the business," said the old lady, as she came out of her reverie. "Could thee get the clock, girls?"

Barbara said "yes," and rose. "If it could only be mended," she added. They needed it very much, having to keep their mother's watch down stairs most of the time. Florence brought forward a small table, and presently Barbara came down with the clock, a small, old-fashioned bronze affair, that had, in its day, been quite costly. She placed it on the table.

"What I am going to do, may result in nothing," said the old lady, her cheeks quite red with excitement. "Don't tell thy mother, girl's; I am too old to bear being laughed at." She opened the long-unused lid. "Thee remembers Mrs. Watkin's," she added.

"Yes, indeed," said Barbara, "she took care of grandfather."

"Thee remembers the particulars of thy grandfather's death, I suppose. Thy uncle Harper was called away, some forty-eight hours before thy grandfather's death, by the illness of his first wife, who died soon after."

Barbara remembered hearing her mother tell about it.

"Thee also may recollect that Mrs. Watkins was alone with thy grandfather to the last. She was a very strange woman, was Mrs. Watkins. Well—" and there was another pause, while nurse seemed looking into space.

Floss and June glanced at each other. June felt that a story of some kind was coming, a mystery was to be unravelled, and crept up closer to the good old Quaker's side. Both sisters had that strange mysterious feeling, as if some great and strange secret was about to be imparted to them.





CHAPTER VIII

NURSE TOWNLEY TELLS HER DREAM.

"I would recall a vision which I dreamed,
Perchance in sleep."

WHEN her excitement Barbara had risen. Her beautiful eyes shone with strange expectation, her hands were tightly clasped together.

"Now, don't thee be getting nervous, child," said Nurse Townley. "Though it is borne in upon me that some dreams may be visions sent from the Lord. Yet this may not be one of them, thee sees. But I was thinking how thy father always said that thy Uncle Harper had wronged him shamefully, though he never could lay proof at his door—and I knew thy uncle Harper seldom left the bedside of his father, nor would he, as he did, if he had not been called away by a message that was peremptory.

I also remembered that old Mrs. Watkins, wearied out with her cares, fell sick of a fever, and I tended her there in thy grandfather's house till she died, and she did nothing but rave about the clock and thy grandfather. So, putting this and that together, I confess that the dream I am about to tell thee, three times repeated, thrilled me with a sense that something wrong had been done thee."

"But do you believe my grandfather ever made another will in favour of poor papa? Mamma seems to think he did, but that it was hidden or destroyed."

"I cannot tell thee, friend; he should have done so, though he was mortal weak, poor body, in some things. But first I'll tell thee the dream. It does seem to me, indeed, a most remarkable vision.

"I thought I was back in the old house again, and that thy mother and grandmother were there. Thee has seen the farm-house, the gray brick, with its wide halls and old-fashioned rooms,—they don't build such now-a-days. And perhaps thee knows that thy grandmother was the best earthly friend I ever knew—at least thee has heard, for she was dying when thee was

born. Indeed she was, for all I ever knew did she teach me, with great pains and self-denial, cherishing and loving me more as if I had been a daughter than a servant. Thee can imagine, then, how delighted I was in my dream to see her again in the form. We appeared to be holding delightful converse, when suddenly thy grandfather walked into the room, with that beautiful smile on his face which he used to have. It was very strange, but no one seemed to see him but me, not even thy grandmother. He came forward and looked at me, and I had not the power of speaking, or even of moving, only my eyes, and then he walked slowly up to the clock, opened it, and turned again and nodded to me.

“For two nights following I had the same strange vision, and it so troubled me that I, remembering the old clock was here, and that Mistress Watkins talked of nothing else during her long illness, couldn’t but come over to have a look into the clock and satisfy my own curiosity. I told it to Nanny, who laughed at me; but, seeing that I was worried about it, she advised me to set my mind easy about it at once, *so here I am.* Now thee sees something has

stopped the works of this clock, and I know how to take a clock-face out."

She began moving the screws. The girls all stood by in breathless silence. Presently she held the metallic dial-plate in her hand, and, sure enough, there was something that looked like writing-paper lodged among the wheels, having been rolled into a small compass and thrust up under the machinery.

"It did seem to me I should see it," said the nurse, drawing a deep breath. "Thee sees this paper is all that matters with the clock; that out it will run as well as ever. Here, Barbara, child, the eldest daughter shall have the first reading. See if it is of any value."

Barbara took the yellowed paper with trembling fingers. It proved not to be writing-paper, but a superior kind of whitish packing-paper, that had been torn from some cover of a parcel. And there was writing—hard to decipher, so shaken and weak must have been the hand that wrote it, but the words sent the blood leaping from Barbara's heart to her cheeks, for it ran thus:—

"I give *Mortlake Farm* to my younger son,

Ross Bennett. These are my last moments, and this is my last will and testament.

"ROSS BENNETT.

"Witnesses { SARAH WATKINS.
 { JOHN COOK, his X mark

"June 19, 18—"

"John Cook" was evidently written by the same hand that wrote Sarah Watkins. The signatures were laboured and in an old-fashioned hand.

Barbara did not cry out, or flush, or exhibit any of the usual signs of joy after the first minute, as her sisters did.

"I'll run and tell mamma!" said Floss, dancing to the door.

"No, no!" said Barbara, "wait a while. Oh, if I could only feel sure! but it all seems like a dream."

"Wake up," laughed June, shaking her.

"That is Sarah Watkins' handwriting," said Nurse Townley. "I could be certain of that, for I have seen it often. She was never a good writer, but would sometimes try her name in order to improve, but her hands had grown stiff with work. I have no doubt your grandfather

fully intended to remember her, but his mind had been somewhat weakened by his long sickness, and I am sure that he felt how unjust he had been in yielding to Harper Bennett as he did. Harper had an unyielding will. I never saw such a man. He brought his own father under complete subjection, and—I dare not trust myself—I hope he was honest—but he loves money too well, too well, and always did from his boyhood up.”

“And now what shall we do?”

Barbara was still very pale, and almost incredulous yet.

“Thee must use thy own judgment, dear child. Suppose thee show it to thy mother?”

“Yes Bab. Oh, Bab! let us go with you.”

“I had better go alone,” said Barbara. “Oh Floss! June! can you realize it? We are rich now! oh, so rich!”

With quick, elastic step she reached her mother's room. It seemed to her as if God was pouring all these mercies upon them because she had asked Him for faith and patience, and she was dumb with amazement. It was real, and no dream, she kept saying to herself. Here was an end of poverty and trouble, and how wonderfully

it had been brought about. With quickened footsteps she reached the landing from which her mother's door led, and opened it softly.

At this, an interior very different from the bare, homely aspect of the lower floor was revealed. Neat curtains hung at the windows. A carpet of soft, bright colours made the step elastic, and the furniture was upholstered in chintz of pretty, cheerful tints, in blue and pink and white. There was a centre-table with books upon it, a work-basket on another table drawn up to the window, and a handsome easy couch facing the same window, which looked as if some one had been lying there quite recently. On the walls were two or three valuable pictures which had been saved from the wreck of their fortunes.

"Mamma, may I come in with some good news?" She could scarcely articulate, so eager, so startled, so delighted, she felt.

"Yes, dear, come quietly; papa is asleep," said Mrs. Bennett. Her mother came forward, wondering what had made the girl's face so brilliant.

"Any letters, dear?"

"Something better than letters, mamma. Oh, *God is so good!*"

"Well—but you are excited."

"How can I help it? Mamma, grandpa made another will! Here it is. Nurse Townley found it in the clock," she whispered eagerly. "Grand-papa gave the farm—gave Mortlake to papa!"

A rustling noise caused them to turn towards the bed. Mr. Bennett was looking at them with bright, inquiring eyes. Evidently he had heard something of what Barbara said. He began to make gestures and almost frantic efforts to speak. Mrs. Bennett was at his side in a moment, soothing him, and in her own quiet way she told him.

Then Barbara, at his motion, read the will. "Now we are provided for, and you will get well and be happy," she said, kissing him tenderly.

He smiled: there were tears in his eyes. After a few moments of silence he said audibly, and with the utmost composure:

"Thank God!"

Mother and daughter locked hands as they looked in each other's eyes.

"What shall you do, dear?" he asked, slowly.

"We must think it over, papa; we must get used to the idea first; and we must be very cautious. Can you trust me?"

"Entirely," was the sweet reply.

Mrs. Bennett made her tell the whole story—and then described Mortlake. It was a beautiful place, she said, the pride of its old master's heart, well-wooded, well-watered; and, now that mineral wealth had been discovered, it would be very hard for Harper to give it up. The principal witness was dead. They would probably dispute the will, but it was so evidently genuine—every one who knew the old man's very characteristic penmanship would say so—they must eventually come into possession.

"Perhaps he will give it up without any trouble," said hopeful Barbara. "Certainly Uncle Harper must do so in common honesty."

"Uncle Harper is very fond of money," said her mother, "it is his idol. But, very likely, as he is rich enough without the farm, he will do what is right."

When Barbara went down stairs, June fluttered up to her with a note.

"Isn't it too bad?" queried June, with mock distress.

Barbara read it and laughed, a gay, joyous, ringing laugh it was, such as had not been heard *from her lips* in the old house before.

"Sister Floss," she said, for June had read it, and Florence was just coming in from the kitchen:—

"'Miss Kate Hanson's respects to Miss Babara Bennett, and it has been decided to hold the tableaux in the hall, as it seems more fitting for a public exhibition. We are all sure that you will not mind to be rid of the trouble. With many thanks for your kindness,

"'THE COMMITTEE.'"

"Poor souls!" laughed June.

"They may just get another Topsy!" said Floss, angrily.

"And another Eva," echoed June.

"And another Cassy," said Barbara, quietly.

"But who will play for them? What will they do without us?" asked important little June.

"I shall be too busy to play—I have business to attend to," said Barbara.

"They might have sent a different notice," Floss exclaimed, indignant, "but they thought we were too poor to care."

"It don't hurt now, does it, Bab?" asked June.

"Nothing hurts now."

"Of course not. And I hope they'll have the grace to be sorry. I suppose then, too," she added, regretfully, "they'll gabble all over the town."

"What do we care, when we shall so soon leave it for Mortlake?"

"How soon?" asked June.

Barbara grew silent again. How soon, indeed? What unforeseen difficulties might not arise? What formidable obstacles might there not be to overcome? The news of the will would fall like a thunderbolt upon the family of Harper Bennett, who, conscious of the injustice of his course towards his brother, made it a pretext for disliking him.

"Let us hope before a great while," she said. "Of course there must be some delay, some formal observances, I suppose, but there can be no mistake about the will. Mortlake Farm must be ours, and should have been long ago."

"How delightful it will be! Only think, Bab, dear, as much fruit as we shall want, and cows, and horses, and carriages, and chickens. How beautiful my precious snow-bird will look among her country neighbours! But, nurse, why

didn't Mrs. Watkins tell somebody about the will before she was taken sick?"

"Perhaps thy grandpapa made some conditions. It may be she was told not to speak of it till a certain time after his death. I judge that to be the case from what fell from her lips while she was sick," said Nurse Townley.

Evening had come on, and still no candle was lighted. Barbara sat apart from the rest, the rays of the moon falling across her slender figure, resting like a crown upon her stately head.

"Bab, darling," said Florence, in a tender voice, "I like to see you in the moonlight, now."

Barbara smiled. She was thinking of how these same silvery beams fell on the broad acres of Mortlake Farm, of the handsome house nestling among orchards, of the bowers of grapevines, the trellised honeysuckles, the borders of roses. As June had said, there they could have fruit in plenty, for all was theirs. Little the occupants of that fair home dreamed that one was coming to dispossess them!

Barbara had so long been the acting head of the household, that it was natural for her to take on the privileges of ownership, even though there was the prospect that her father might get

up again, free from this paralysis of brain and body. When he did, how joyfully all these cares would be surrendered to him, with an ecstasy too sweet to be expressed in words. Oh! could it be coming, that time she had pictured in her mind, rather like a fairy story than any real thing that could by any possibility take place, when they should be surrounded with the comforts and even the luxuries of life again? Her heart sank a little at the thought that it would not be in consequence of her exertions. She had dreamed of making herself a name first, and then building up a fortune, that they whom she loved might owe everything to her.

"After all, what does it matter?" she said to herself. "I shall see them all happy without the care and trials which might overcome me."

The bell rang.

"Oh, dear; just now, company might keep away," said June, a little petulantly.

"June, dear," said Bab, with her natural caution, "we must all be very silent."

"Oh, I'll not tell a living soul," the girl responded, as she went out into the hall.

Presently she returned with Belle Savage,

and Barbara felt that it was kind in her to come, felt in that little moment a silent pang of remorse that she had once judged her somewhat ungraciously.

"How pleasant it looks here in the moonlight," Belle said, delightedly; and indeed the soft, white flame streaming through the many windows brightened the room so pleasantly, softening its outlines and hiding its deficiencies, that it was charming, scantily furnished as it was. Belle was introduced to Nurse Townley, whom she admired silently.

"Then, as she took the chair Floss brought forward, she said:

"Mamma was suddenly summoned to Mrs. Phelps'; they think her little boy is dying. So, as there was nobody at home but me, she took me with her. It is only a little way from here, you know, so I begged to come in and stay with you till she returns."

"I'm so glad you came!" said Barbara, and her face confirmed the welcome. Belle looked at her as she sat down in the soft, sweet light, and thought how more than usually beautiful she was. Presently they were busy discussing the tableaux.

"I suppose you know they are going to have them in the hall," she said.

"Oh, yes they notified me to-day," responded Barbara.

"Did they? Papa was willing to do anything for them, but he will not let me go to the hall, as the shop beneath is always full of coarse men and boys, and sometimes they have fights. Besides, you know he is very decided on the question of temperance, and thinks it wrong that the hall should be hired of a man who keeps a bar."

"How will they possibly get along without you?" queried Floss. "They won't mind my declining Topsy, I suppose. You see we have lost all interest in the matter." Her beaming eyes could not speak, or they would have told why.

"I don't wonder," said Belle, indignantly. "They were all very rude."

"It isn't so much that, though of course we felt very unpleasantly that night. I heard one of the girls tell another, as they passed into the yard, that it was said we had a maniac in the house. I hope if you hear the report you will correct it," said Barbara earnestly. "Poor papa is as sane as you or I can be at this moment, but

he has been a great sufferer, and as he was partially paralysed and quite deaf, in his efforts to speak he never knew what strange sounds he made. There is no danger of its happening again, though; the doctor say he will be sure to recover."

"I'm so glad for you!" said Belle, brightly, "and I'll be certain to contradict any evil report I may hear. But there is mamma coming, and I must go. Come over and see me, won't you? All of you come," she added, with a bright glance around, "and we'll get up some tableaux on our own account."

"Isn't she nice?" cried Floss, dancing back into the room. "Riches haven't spoiled her, for you can see she is *real*. And, nurse, the old room does look really cheerful now, and life seems worth the living."

"I'm glad," thought Barbara, as she stood at one of the windows, all bathed in the moonlight. "I'm so glad I stopped grumbling before this blessing came; that is, if money is a blessing, and I think it will be to us. How bad and foolish I have been—how unthankful for the favours God has given me!"

Nurse Townley looked up smiling, as Barbara

moved towards her. It seemed for the moment as if she had interpreted her thoughts.

"Well, deary," she said, "for one of thy age thee has had a hard time of it. Thee saw thy father suffer over the loss of that beautiful boy—my boy, I always called him—and a finer lad never was. Thee has seen him in sorrow from death, dishonesty and bankruptcy. Please God, I hope now thee is going to see better days. It has pleased the Lord to lead thee to suffer and bear the yoke in thy youth. It will please Him now to develop the riches of thy experience, I doubt not. May He help thee to bear prosperity as well as thee has borne adversity."

"Oh, no, nurse, not well, I fear, I wish it had been; and nurse, what will Uncle Harper say? He is not at all like papa."

The dear old lady shook her head. "He ought to remember the words of Holy Writ," she said, quietly, "'Be sure thy sin will find thee out.'"



CHAPTER IX.

IN THE MOONLIGHT.

"The place was thick with many a stately tree,
In dim autumnal beauty arching o'er,
Shedding its painted leaves."

IT was so pleasant in the moonlight, that Barbara and Florence still sat by the window, after nurse Townley and June had gone to bed.

"Bab, dear, is it right to build castles, I wonder? I can hardly realise our great good fortune, can you?"

Barbara shook her head, but smiled.

"And though I like to work about, I do despise the small drudgeries, such as cleaning pots and kettles, and greasy dishes."

"Do you believe anybody likes it?" queried Barbara.

"Some people don't mind at all—people who have strong nerves and no delicate notions—at

any rate, they act as if they didn't. Washing wouldn't be bad, if it were not so tiresome—but scrubbing is clean out of the question for me. That, I hate. If it isn't too warm weather, ironing is agreeable, except when the starch will stick. Do you remember Mortlake, Barbara?"

"Perfectly, dear?"

"Is it nice, or poky?"

"Nice, beautiful!" said Barbara, her face kindling. "The house is large and roomy, with a lovely deep bay window, which Uncle Harper has had put in. There are walks and alleys, as green, and trim, and shaded as they can be, and delicious little arbours, and a lawn, and wonderful great trees—grandpapa loved trees and would never cut them down. Then it is all surrounded by gardens and orchards."

"Just think of our living there and owning it—owning it, Bab! But suppose Uncle Harper won't give it up?"

"He must," said Barbara, lifting her head. "He will be still rich without that, and grandpapa always intended it for papa—he often told him so. Of course, Uncle Harper won't dare to dispute the will."

"How shall you let him know about it?"

"I haven't decided yet," said Barbara, quietly. "I shall wait and see what reply he makes to my letter."

"What letter, dear?"

"One I wrote the other night—after the tableaux people had gone. I am afraid you might call it a begging letter."

"O, Bab!"

"O, Florence! it was quite right, in view of all we have suffered, and the way he has cheated us. Yes, I believe it, and so does nurse Townley. Nurse has her wits about her—she is sharp, and, being out at service, she sees more than any of us could, and she thinks Uncle Harper dishonest—I am sure she does. However, I shall never have to write another, there's comfort in that thought. But I was so desperate that night, and I thought of old Hoxie's refusal to trust us, and how wicked it seemed, that Uncle Harper should have everything, and poor papa absolutely nothing—so I wrote him just the truth about our circumstances, and asked him to help us. I was sorry enough, though, after the letter had gone."

"Never mind, darling—as you say, it's for the last time, I hope. June picked quarts of

currants to-day, and they will bring a large price, for it is not a good fruit year. These, and the gooseberries, will pay our little bills, I hope. I am so glad, for June's sake, that this property is ours, she is such a delicate little thing. I somehow fancy she never should work like the rest of us—there's something about her so peculiar. Do you know, I went into the old barn to-day after eggs, and, hearing a voice, I crept up softly, there was June, standing in the middle of the old broken floor, declaiming—and the poetry—I was sure I had never read it before—and, Bab, dear, I think she wrote it—that is, composed it herself.”

“That reminds me,” said Barbara. “Just as I came in from taking down the clothes, she slipped a folded paper in my hand. ‘Read it to-night,’ she said, and ran away. Do get the candle, Florence, I should like to see what it is.”

Florence lighted a candle and brought it to Barbara, and Barbara read :

“JUST A FEW THOUGHTS.

“ O flower, opening to the sun,
With petals whiter than the snow,
Whose fragrant life has just begun,
Do you the dear Lord know ?

“ O summer-bird, whose breast of red
Shines softer than the ruby's glow,
With fluttering wings and crowned head,
Do you the dear Lord know ?

“ O clouds that drift like silver seas,
O drops that from their treasures flow ;
O sunbeams, gilding all the leas,
Do you the dear Lord know ?

“ O winds that whisper solemnly,
And smite the pink-eyed blossoms low,
Or fan my cheeks in passing by,
Do you the dear Lord know ?

“ I ask all earth and mighty seas,
Waiting the musical answer low ;
And angels sweet all say to me :
‘ Yes, we our dear Lord know.’ ”

“ That's the one,” said Florence, with glistening eyes. Dear little June! what a beautiful genius she has! She is the poet of the family, you are the beauty and musician, and I am the poor little house-woman without any gifts.”

“ Without any gifts, Floss, when you are a perfect sunbeam? Why, I think to have such spontaneous happiness, and such a constant flow of spirits, is the greatest gift of all.”

“ Maybe, but I should like to be beautiful. O, Bab! it must be splendid; I mean, when one can turn one's beauty to some account. Dear me, how often I have fancied you a queen, and dressed you in rich garments and diamonds.

How splendidly you will shine, Bab, dear, when we come into our fortune."

"Nonsense, Floss, that is the last thing I think of. The rides for father, and the freedom from care for poor mamma—that will be the most beautiful part of all."

"And we must make a scholar of June," said unselfish Florence, eagerly.

"And what of you?" asked Barbara.

"Oh, I shall always be a little glow-worm quite satisfied with my bit of shine," laughed Florence. "You both need some disinterested party to admire you. Only just think of it, the moonlight is waiting for us on old Mortlake. Didn't mother say there was a beautiful river view from one of the windows?"

"Yes, there is everything to satisfy the taste and please the eye at Mortlake. It was grandpapa's favourite summer residence. The longest visit I ever spent, was just before poor Philip went from us. He was there, too; and we had a boat on the little lake, about a quarter of a mile from the grounds. He managed the boat splendidly, and we took a long sail together, though, when grandpapa heard of it, he was *quite angry*, for he thought Philip too young to

handle a boat. But after that, when grandpapa saw him on the water one day, he praised him very much—for he always liked a boat. Dear Phil looked forward to a great many such sails, but he never took another.”

“How very strange it is about Philip; it makes me shiver to think of it,” said Florence, in a low voice—“but come, we forget there’s a day’s ironing before us. It is time we went to bed.”





CHAPTER X.

IN PRINT.

"A violet by a mossy stone,
Half hidden from the eye,
Fair as a star, when only one
Is shining in the sky."

JUNE'S room was like a little museum. It was very small, but a convenient alcove for the little bedstead made it seem larger than it really was. Out of cast-off muslin dresses, she had contrived curtains for the long windows, and, by dint of piecing fragments of carpets together, she had made a floor-covering of an extraordinary pattern, but which, nevertheless, being bright and warm in colour, gave character to the room. The little shelves on which her few books stood were specimens of her own handiwork, neat and tasteful. Dried flowers and ferns, arranged in pretty baskets, hung from the walls. There were specimens of

almost every variety of fern, neatly and handsomely mounted, and a collection of thirty or forty pictures, all framed ingeniously in oak acorns and paper and straw. June was very proud of her little study, as she called it. Not a flaw could be seen by the most prying glances. In arrangement it was faultless, as it was charming in taste. Here June kept her commonplace book, her diary, her poems, many of which she had written while still a child, and on which no eyes but her own had ever looked. Of late, however, she was improving her gift wonderfully, and within a week, moved less by ambition than the hope ultimately that she might benefit the dear ones at home, she had sent one little poem, over which she had laboured many a day, to a prominent city paper, with little expectation, however, that she should ever hear from it again. Florence came, with her usual dancing step, up to her room, one morning, with a letter and a newspaper.

"See here, June, darling, a letter and a paper for you. I should like to know why the fates that dwell in post-offices passed me by. You and Barbara get all the good things. Is it something you expected?"

"Oh, give them to me, Floss, dear," cried June, as her sister held them temptingly near, and then snatched them back again.

"Of course I will, but not if you look like that. Your cheeks are as white as chalk. I should like to know what you mean, changing after that fashion? There!" she put the papers in her hand, "now give me a kiss for them."

June complied.

"Well, your lips are cold enough, quite icy in fact; I won't bring your letters and papers, if that is the way you intend to receive them. Tell me all about it by-and-by, that's a love," and Florence was gone.

June sat down, and both paper and letter fell from her nerveless hand. Her heart beat with fast-leaping pulsations, and she was half scared at her emotions. "After all, it may not be—and—but yes, it is, or why would the paper come?" she said to herself. "Still he may have sent the paper out of courtesy, and a letter declining the poem. If he has, I don't think I shall ever try again." At last she gained courage to pick the journal tremblingly up, and as she did so the vapours born of the delicacy of her *perceptions* vanished almost instantaneously.

"I shall have to become used to these things," she whispered, slowly unfolding the large handsome sheet. For a brief second the faintness came on again, then a fresh rosy glow spread over all her face, and a sunny smile made it brilliant, for there, in a conspicuous column, was her poem, so clearly printed, looking so straight and handsome and bright, that she could do nothing for a long time but feast her eyes upon it.

Then, slowly as you and I may read it now, she read it line by line:

"MY WOOD FIRE.

"Crackle away, O yellow pine !
Lift pennon and flag, O fire !
Laugh with a will as you rise and fall,
Or sparkle with crimson ire.
I read strange tales in your spiral flames,
And your embers are pictures in ashen frames.

"Sing your sweetest, O heart of oak !
Though you break as your songs ascend ;
Your forest blood is a kingly kind—
It warms the foe and the friend.
Do you miss the winds that were won't to play
Through your glorious branches day by day ?

"Grandfather sits on the other side,
And smiles at the ruddy light ;
He croons, as he leans on his knotted cane,
'The fire is a cheery sight ;
I made one fifty odd years ago,
With a mighty back-log out of the snow.

“ ‘Twas a Christmas day, I was twenty-one,
And my freedom-suit was new ;
Breeches and smalls, with a sky-blue vest,
And a buckle on either shoe.
The buckles were silver, no sham in them,
The same that I gave to your brother Jem.’

“ He paused, and his wintry lips grew red,
And his eyes wore summer's blue ;
‘ It was the night I brought Hetty home,
And the old farm-house was new ;
We had both just taken our marriage vow—
I don't see such women as Hetty, now.’

“ Then grandfather rubbed his eyes and smiled,
But his thoughts were far away,
I think he saw, in the fitful light,
The ghost of that Christmas day ;
While a vanished face came back to see
The dear old man, and the fire, and me.”

Now for the letter—oh, dear! what could he say! It was strange he had taken the pains to write to her, a humble little girl so far away—and her hands trembled, even as she hurriedly cut the envelope.

Out dropped a new five-dollar bill—not much, to be sure, but the token of a coming fortune to little June Bennett, the earnest that her efforts were not evanescent and perishing, but green and bright with laurel leaves that were to be woven sometime into a thornless crown. Beautiful aspirations of youthful genius in the first *flush of its success!* The practical realisation is

to come, but it will never dim the lustre of that first triumph.

Meantime, a far different scene was being enacted down-stairs, for a letter had come to Barbara, and by the post-mark she knew it to be an answer to the missive she had sent to her uncle. She opened it with contending emotions, with which a sort of pity was mingled, that she was so soon to dispossess them. She knew that his wife, who was silly and ignorant, a girl he had married from school, when she was scarcely more than a child, would contest her claim, for she had never liked Barbara—so she was prepared for the worst.





CHAPTER XI

THE LETTER.

"And in misfortune's dreary hour,
Or Fortune's prosperous gale,
'Twill have a holy, cheering power—
There's no such word as fail."

HO her utter astonishment, the letter was written in a fine feminine hand.

"MISS BARBARA BENNETT,—In my husband's absence, I open all his letters by his request. Yours came to hand yesterday morning. I do not think, after consideration, that I shall trouble your Uncle Harper with it at all. He is very much embarrassed at present, having gone to great expense in improving his city property.

"If I understand rightly, your Uncle Harper has given you a splendid education at one of the best academies in the State of New York. I *have* often heard him say that he considered you

every way qualified to teach. I am sure I have known many girls, no older than you, who have been the principal support of their families. I don't think it best for you to ask your uncle for an increase of the income he already gives your father; it is very hard to have more than your own upon your hands to provide for, that is, I mean, your own family.

"I am sorry you are reduced so low, but I understand that your father was very careless in business matters, and your mother extravagant, but, of course, all that can't be helped now. I have a great many acquaintances in New York, who are merchants, and I think I could, perhaps, make interest for you to get you a situation in some nice store as book-keeper, or something of that kind, where you could command very good wages for a woman. Or, you could teach school in some one of the country villages. I think a situation in some up-town store would be best for you ultimately, as I understand from your uncle that your handsome, and—"

At this point, Barbara dashed the letter angrily to the floor, and stood, for a moment, with swelling throat and blazing eyes.

"Insolent! insulting!" she exclaimed, her lips

quivering. "Oh, poor papa, if you were only well! But don't speak of this, Florence," she added, as her sister stood looking on, her eyes full of tears; "don't let them know I have heard from Mortlake. Oh, how angry mother would be."

"Dear Bab, I wouldn't mind it," exclaimed Florence—"at least, yes, I should, of course I should, and want to retaliate, too. But oh, Barbara, how little they dreamed that things have changed as they have, and it is they who must ask of you now."

"I am glad; I should like to see them beg."

"O, Barbara! that is not right; that is not Christian, you know."

"I know it, Florence;" and Barbara tried to conquer her revengeful feelings. "But I cannot read the rest."

"Let me," said Florence, and she went on:

"And you might, in time, chance to get a rich hushand. I know some ladies who have done so, one of them married the head merchant of the firm.

"We have just moved to Mortlake for the summer months. My little Emma's health is *not very good*, and if at any time you wish to

avail yourself of any good position, pray, in passing, come and see us.—Very truly, etc., etc.’”

“In passing,” cried Barbara, all her soul indignant again, “I will avail myself of that invitation, at all events. Now, I shall go to Mortlake.”

“You, dear! you go to Mortlake?” ejaculated Florence; “what! not alone?”

“I am not at all afraid, dear,” said Barbara.

“Oh, but I am sure mamma could never be brought to say ‘Yes.’”

“Perhaps she would.”

Florence was called away. Barbara put the letter in her desk; the flushing, outraged delicacy had not yet paled in her cheek. The work was done, she had still an hour of leisure, and so went to inspect her wardrobe. There was nothing there fit to wear on a journey of so much importance. The old black alpaca was worn threadbare, and even a new outfit of collars and cuffs would not suffice it to make it presentable. All her dresses were old-fashioned. The hat would do to travel in, with a new ribbon; she had used her gloves carefully, but they were scarcely respectable, and what to do for a more modern outfit she did not know.

Meantime there had been much discussion, about the new acquisition, up-stairs in Mrs. Bennett's room. Mr. Bennet could use his voice but sparingly, and his articulation was by no means perfect as yet. His wife was still obliged to remain at his side, as he required more tending than ever. It was plainly to be seen that in his recovery he was outstripping the most sanguine hopes of the physician, who claimed for his medicine what was really due more to newly awakened hope and loss of the dread of poverty. Mr. Bennet was somewhat apprehensive at times. The portion of the will had been so strangely come by, that its relation seemed more like a romantic dream than a substantial fact, and he knew his brother too well to believe that he would give up the least part of his possessions without a struggle.

"It is just possible that his conscience may sting him," he said, "so that he will, though reluctantly, make compensation without a great deal of trouble; but I very much fear. Ah, if I were only well!"

"But you are getting well, my dear," said his wife, gently, "remember what you were a week ago."

"Aye, a log, and not even drifting; a man dumb and almost dead. Thank God, that bitter agony is gone. Yes, I am getting better; but it will be long before I have the complete use of all my faculties, if I ever have," he added with a sigh. "I could carry this business forward. I hate to entrust it to a stranger, but what else can I do?"

"Leave it with One who sees the end from the beginning," said Mrs. Bennett softly. "He has heard our prayers; He has never forsaken us; it is God who has brought this wonderful thing about. We have a great deal to be thankful for. And now shall I finish this beautiful thing I was reading?"

"Yes, dear, take me away from this weary sick-room as far as you can; let me see sun, and sky, and green fields, if it be but in pictures. I like to hear you read." So, for a few moments, the low, sweet voice of Mrs. Bennett filled all the place with melody, as she read the stirring words of Kingsley:

"An ugly, straight-edged, monotonous fir plantation? Well, I like it outside and inside. I need no saw-edge of mountain peaks, to stir up my imagination with the sense of the sublime.

while I can watch the edge of these fir peaks against the red sunset. They are my Alps, little ones it may be, but after all, as I asked before, what is size?

"Have you eyes to see? Then lie down on the grass and look near enough to see something more of what is to be seen. You will find tropic jungles in every square foot of turf; mountain cliffs at the mouth of every rabbit-burrow; tremendous cataracts, deep glooms and sudden glories, in every foot-broad rill which wanders through the turf. All is there for you to see, if you will but rid yourself of that idol of space; and nature, as every one will tell you, who has seen, dissected, an insect under the microscope, is as grand and graceful in her smallest as in her largest forms.

"The March breeze is chilly; but I can always be warm if I like, in my winter garden. I turn my horse's head to the red wall of fir-stems, and leap over the furze-grown bank, into my cathedral. Here are endless vistas of smooth, red-veined shafts, holding up the warm dark roof, paved with rich brown fir needles, a carpet, at which nature has been at work for forty years.

"*Did a spider run over these dead leaves? I*

almost fancy I can hear his footfall. The creaking of the saddle, the soft tread of the mare upon the fir needles, jar my ears. I seem alone in a dead world. A dead world! and yet so full of life, if I had eyes to see. Above my head, every fir needle is breathing; around me, every stem is distilling strange juices which no laboratory of men can make. Where my dull eye sees only death, the eye of God sees boundless life and motion, health and use."

Barbara, meanwhile, had been pursuing her inspection among the bureau drawers, and now came slowly out of her room in a deep study. She felt peculiarly alone as she walked about the great dining-room and pondered upon ways and means. Toddlekins, June's pet kitten, followed her, playing about her feet. She took up the little soft white thing in her arms, and it cuddled down, purring and contented.

She was glad to see Tilly May coming up to the house. The two had not met since that memorable walk. Tilly came in, sparkling and smiling as usual, to show her new suit and bonnet, she said. Wasn't it a pretty pattern? and, only think, she had bought the goods so cheap, at Mrs. Esty's, who was really improving in her

shop-keeping. One had no need to go to town for goods; and Mrs. Esty had more. She had thought at the time, it would be so becoming to Barbara. And Tilly was full of news. After rehearsing the sad scene which had taken place when poor Betty learned of her loss, she sadly told how the beautiful baby had sickened and died, and Betty, quite heart-broken, had begged to come back to her old place.

"So there she is with mother," continued Tilly, quite unconscious that a tear or two had quietly run over her cheek, "and I don't believe you would know her. I never thought the Irish took things to heart so, but mamma declares they are the truest and fondest creatures in the world."

How to get herself a new suit like Tilly's! it was just what she needed, Barbara sat and pondered after her cheerful friend had gone. Mrs. Esty had "plenty more," as Tilly said; she would trust her, but then she hated to be trusted. All right-feeling women do.

"Barbara, dear!" It was June's pretty, pleading face, with such a wealth of expression in every line. Barbara smiled, and felt glad all through her being at sight of it. It was like a *new revelation*.

"I've got something to show you," said June softly ; and she crept forward with her treasure. "Look at that."

"Why, June, darling ! you don't say that is yours ! What, in print already ? Our little sister June ! I never was so glad and so astonished in my life."

"And they sent me this—it is **not** much, but—"

"Much," interrupted Barbara, "why, it would seem a fortune to me, got in this way. How happy and how proud I am ! how proud we shall all be ! Have you told mamma ?"

"No, I couldn't," said reticent, blushing June. "I shall to-morrow."

"Oh, how beautiful it is !" and Barbara's eyes were full of loving tears.

"Barbara, will you take this ?"

"I, why should I take it ?" Barbara faltered.

"Because you need things so much more than we do—gloves, ribbons, and little things. Please take it."

"Not for the world, June ; I've settled nicely how I'm to get all I want for the present. Keep your money, unless papa should need something very much ; and take care of yourself, little lady,

or you will be sick, with all this joy, honour, and excitement."

"I had much rather you would have it, Barbara."

"Don't want it, my dear, or I would take it; go up and lie down—your eyes look terribly in need of rest," she added, and June left her, full of wonder and thankfulness.

"Barbara, dear, I wish we could manage to get a few strawberries for papa. His mind has run upon them all day; he seems to long for them."

Barbara turned round. Her mother stood at the door, a spray of honeysuckle in her hand, which perfumed all the air.

"Yes, if he wants them, he must have them," said Barbara, "and he shall."

"Do you know, dear, I have been looking over one of my trunks to-day, and I find a really good black silk among my faded old treasures. I had forgotten that I had one, and this is very nice. You had better put it out in the air, and try and manage to get Miss Esty to make it over. A beautiful dress, as good as new, might be got out of it. Gored skirts are worn now, you know, and this is straight, with a train. It *is just the thing* you need."

"But it ought to be made over for you, dear," said Barbara, patting her mother's thin face—"there's no denying that I want it terribly. A black silk is the longing of my life, but why should I take it from you?"

"I wouldn't have it, Bab—I don't want it—I have set my heart upon your taking it; so there's nothing more to be said."

"Of course not," replied Barbara, laughing, "but if I do you the favour to accept it, I shall want you to do me a favour presently, and you must not deny me."

"Poor child, you get few favours," said her mother, sadly.

"Enough for my good, I expect—there! I had like to tell you a secret, but June will tell you to-morrow. It is something lovely, mamma, and will make you hold up your poor, tired head. As for papa, I don't know what he will do. Don't ask me any questions—tell papa he shall have the strawberries," and the little bell sounding up-stairs, Mrs. Bennett had to go.

Barbara was soon on her way to Mrs. Esty's. The road was hot and dusty, but the sky shone like one great sapphire, and Barbara's heart was so light that she seemed to be treading upon

flowers, instead of stepping over her toes in the dry, white powder, inches thick, all the way.

You have seen a country variety store, with all sorts of coloured fly-specked patterns in the window, and all kinds of goods spread out for inspection, from a paper of pins to a plaid shawl of the broadest description and the most glaring tints. In addition to these, over the door hung a sign—yellow letters on a blue ground—informing the public that Miss Martha Esty did fashionable dressmaking. The store was neat and clean inside; three counters running round three sides, full of boxes, and glass cases full of a jumble of colour. At the end of one of these was noticeable a particularly sunshiny room, at whose window stood a large collection of brilliant plants—and where could be seen a handsome hair-cloth sofa, a real mahogany chest of drawers, and the prettiest rag carpet there was in the town, made by the skilful fingers of Miss Martha Esty, a spinster of thirty years' standing. A great many bright little mats covered this *chef-d'œuvre*, and as the bell over the door tinkled at Barbara's entrance, there came out a comfortable-looking little body, with a jaunty cap, a white dress, and a black silk apron. This

was the maternal Mrs. Esty, mother of Martha, who, some people declared, looked younger than her daughter.

"Is Miss Martha in?" asked Barbara, who shook the plump hand extended at sight of her.

"No, she ain't, she's up to Kunnel Cooper's, making dresses for their darter Caroline. She's been awful busy; but then, you know, Martha's a driver, she likes that."

"I wonder when she will be at liberty?"

"Well, Miss Bab, I sorter think she gits through to-morrow, at the kunnel's. She's been makin' six dresses, fust class. Dear me, but she's tired as anything when she gets home. She's dretful pertickler, you know, is the kunnel's wife, dretful. If a hook, or eye, or a button, ain't jest so, off it has to come; and if there's a wrinkle—my, oh my! I expect Marthy druther work for most enybody, only she pays well, and never makes a fuss at the bill. She's good 'bout that. Ever been there?"

"No, I never have," said Barbara dreamily, looking for the grey goods that make such pretty suits.

"Shan't I show you suthin', Miss Bab? I've got some new things in, and they're real pretty

—suthin' that'll jest suit you, tall folks shows off dresses so nice."

In a few moments Barbara was deep in the selection of a new travelling dress. She was fond of colours, but never wore them, and while her glances were divided between the soft tints of pink and blue, she was mentally deciding upon an article even prettier, to her taste than Tilly's, and indeed graver.

"I wonder if Miss Martha would spare me a day or two, perhaps three?" asked Barbara.

"Dear, bless my soul and body! Miss Bab, of course Marthy'd be glad to come, and I'm sure you'd like her. She gives beautiful fits—her fits is what makes her so popular."

Barbara blushed violently as she took out her gold medal.

"This is solid gold, Mrs. Esty, and I think a good deal of it, but I shall have to change it, because I want the money."

"Why, the's no need o' changing this beautiful thing, though I see its value," said the little shop-woman, ringing it on the counter.

"Indeed, you must change it, Mrs. Esty, it will oblige me greatly, for I want the money, as *I said before*. I am going on a journey."

"Dear heart! you? laws me! where be you going—far?"

"New York State, to see some relatives," said Barbara.

"But you're not going to stay—to leave us, I hope. Seem's if, though I never see nothing much of you all, still your are like neighbours. Them two sisters of yours go by here every morning to school, when it ain't vacation—and heart o' mine, one of 'em seems just like an angel with her pretty innocent smile and her sweet 'Good mornin'. Not but they ain't both jest as pretty as picters, but there's something about Miss June as always goes to my heart, she seems like one o' them that isn't long for this world—there now, my foolish old tongue—I didn't mean that exactly, you know."

"June is a very sweet little sister," said Barbara, her heart swelling as she thought of what she had seen and heard that day.


"Then I'll cut you fifteen yards of this and—you didn't tell me you were going to stay—" and the inquisitive old face turned to Barbara with a peculiar don't-put-me-off expression.

"I'm not going to stay long—if you will, you may keep this," she added, pointing to the

medal, "and I shall be sure to redeem it. You see I am going to look after a little property that belongs to my father," she innocently added, little aware that before night the news would have spread with uncounted additions all through the village.

"You don't say, dear!—well, I wish you every kind of good luck, I'm sure. I'll change the gold for ye, and keep it till ye git back. Any time you call you shall have it. Yes, I'll tell Marthy, and mebbby she gits off to-night, if she does, she'll come right over fust thing to-morrow. She ain't no call elsewhere that I know on—here's the change—jest fifteen dollars."

Barbara had never felt rich before, but as she paid for the berries, and several little delicacies for her father, the consciousness of the new to-be-enjoyed possessions thrilled her as she unconsciously appropriated all its advantages of wood and field and river. At home she went round like one in a dream. Sometimes she threw her sewing aside and sat down at the old piano, and sweet chords, and sweeter melodies, fresh from a loving and grateful heart, made the room ring again. Florence was quite wild over her sister *June*.



"After all, I guess *she* is going to make the fortune," she said. "All day the child has been buried in papers. She showed me the skeleton of a story—the first lines of a new poem—and I believe she will work herself into a fever if she gets much more encouragement. If the next newspaper will only snub her, I think it will be all the better for her health."

"Why, is June sick?" asked Barbara, rising from the piano.

"No, but you know how she goes into things, and now her ambition is thoroughly roused she will do nothing but work. It seems a pity to call her down to common-place realities."

"I'm going up to see," said Barbara.

June sat at her desk when her sister's knock was heard. Barbara found her flushed and radiant, with all her papers laid out.

"Sweetest face was ever seen!" she mentally exclaimed, and then came Mrs. Etsy's words, knocking at the door of her heart like a prophecy, "She seems like one of them that isn't long for this world."

"June, the chickens want you," said Barbara, sententiously.

The girl looked up in wide-eyed wonder.

"The chickens—want me?"

"Yes, and the birds, and the flowers, and the fresh air—in fact all out of doors. I'm not going to let you bury yourself, because you are going to be famous. Go down stairs and romp."

"O, no," June spoke up briskly, "not till I've done this—and this—and this—" rattling her papers about with animation. "Do you see that?"—she held up a title-page—"that's to be a book. I planned it out ever so long ago—and here are subjects I've been gathering for poems—and here are sketches laid out—I'm going to be a busy woman for these two vacation months. Bab, I've set my heart on giving you a new piano."

Barbara laughed, but there were tears in her eyes. She bent down and kissed the glowing forehead.

"You are undertaking too much, little one, quite too much," she said. "Suppose you rest a little upon the laurels you have already won. I would. You are not accustomed to such close confinement; only think, you have hardly looked in upon us all day—and we have missed you so."

"Have you missed me?" queried June, the matter striking her in a new light—"well, per-

haps I have been a little selfish. I never left Floss alone before, either ; where is she ?”

“Walking up and down the garden path, consoling herself with Snow-bird and her chicks as best she can.”

“I believe I should like to see the chickens,” and a rosy colour came into her cheeks, “to think I should forget them, little things.” She was placing her papers carefully away now.

“’Tis even so,” repeated Barbara with mock emphasis, “the old and long-tried must yield to the new.”

“O, Bab, dear, you don’t mean that you believe I could forget you all,” said June, turning round, “for any new love.”

“My darling,” said Barbara, kissing her again, “I didn’t mean anything, but you are the baby, you know, and we can’t live without you.”





CHAPTER XII

THE JOURNEY IN THE COACH.

"If in talking from morning till night
A sign of our wisdom there be,
The swallows are wiser by right,
For they prattle much faster than we."

MARTHA Esty, humble, homely, little old maid that she was, always felt more humble and much homelier in the presence of "them Bennetts." She bowed down to them with a deference that was really genuine.

"Somehow at the kunnel's everything's kind o' common, rich as they are," she said to her mother before starting. "I'm always thinking that they'll be making fun of me as soon as my back is turned; but the Bennetts are ladies, and just as sweet in their ways to one as another. I jest think I'll enjoy the day there."

And so she did, as she made patchwork on the living-room floor, and snipped, and cut, and retailed her limited knowledge of the latest

fashions. June and Florence sat down-stairs and helped, and showed such interest in all she did and said, that Martha fell in love with them over again, and decided that it would be pleasant to be called there two or three days a week on an average.

"Dear, what a lovely fit, and so easy!" she said, as the carefully basted body was tried on Barbara's full yet slender form. "Not a bias to take in anywhere. If you knew how I have to work over some figgers, turning in and lettin' out, and then gittin' blame that don't properly belong to me if there's a failure. It is such a pleasure to work for you, Miss Bab."

At six precisely Martha folded her patterns and laid them aside, picked up all the pieces that could be picked up, and swept the shreds and bits of cotton into the fire-place.

"If my eyes wasn't tender I'd stay and work by candle-light," she said; "but if I done that a few times I shouldn't be able to do any work, so you'll excuse me, Miss Bab, and I'll come earlier in the morning. There won't be but half a day's work, anyway."

"It will suit me just as well," said Barbara, quietly.

That night Barbara conferred with her mother about the projected visit. Mrs. Bennett demurred. She could not allow Barbara to go alone, she said, in a very decided tone.

"But then what are we to do?" asked Barbara.

"Wait till papa gets well, or till he can see some one in whom he has confidence. Some lawyer, perhaps."

"Yes, and then have the fees to pay. No, mamma, I think I had better manage it myself. You know I was always a favourite with Uncle Harper."

"There is no such terrible hurry," said her mother, musingly, "now that we are sure that the property is ours."

"My dear mamma Bennett, how do we know that papa ever will get well?" queried Barbara.

"I am quite sure of it now, Barbara. He sat up in bed yesterday."

"But think. It must be months before he is well enough to transact business."

Still Mrs. Bennett interposed objections, till one day Barbara said:—

"Very well, mamma, I won't ask it again. *Let it rest for the present.*"

Then Florence went to Mrs. Bennett.

"I am sure Barbara intends to go," she said.

"What! without my consent?"

"Mamma, Barbara is quite old enough to travel alone safely, and her heart is so set upon it," pleaded Florence. "She does not know I have come to you, but I can see she is so unhappy."

Mrs. Bennett was silent, but not long after she saw Barbara and gave her consent; so Barbara made her preparations, and in a few day was ready to set out for Mortlake.

She decided to carry the wonderful paper upon which the bequeathment was written, but, as a matter of precaution, she copied it, intending to show her uncle only the *fac-simile*. Florence thought she had better leave the real will at home, and the sequel proved that she was wiser than her sister; but Barbara, who had more than sufficient confidence in herself, decided that she knew best, so she had her way. Everything was in readiness on the bright but hot July morning when Barbara stood in the midst of the family group saying her farewells.

"If only some of us were going with you," half sobbed Florence. "You never travelled alone before in your life."

"I shan't be alone, dear, and I'm not in the least afraid. Watch June; don't let her write too much, and be careful of the bread, dear; you know sometimes you forget, and it burns. And good-bye, precious ones all."

The adieus were said. Barbara felt something rolling down her cheeks as the coach rattled away with one solitary traveller beside herself, —a young man, who regarded her with a cool stare that made her furious.

"S'pose you don't object to my smoking?" he said, nonchalantly.

"Indeed, but I do, though," said Babara, in a voice that gave him a start; so, in some trepidation, he put his cigar out of the coach window till the fire had disappeared. He was evidently a young man of experience, and had laid in a good stock of self-esteem. Accustomed to deference for his own special views at home, he probably regarded Barbara in the same light that he did his "women folks," and wished to make her feel at ease. The object was creditable to his good-nature, perhaps, but he was destined to receive a succession of shocks that jarred his nerves in a way that was decidedly novel.

"'Quainted up here?" he asked, as they

passed a cluster of houses at the foot of one hill and on the brow of another.

"No," said Barbara, ungraciously.

"They're all Stepnets here," he graciously explained; "this is Stepnet Hill. Deacon Stepnet's a cousin of my father's step-sister. They always send a pig over in killing time to our house."

"In token of the relationship?" Barbara could not help saying, her lips twitching.

"Why, yes, I s'pose so," he answered, delighted with the recognition of his notice that had only elicited a "yes" or "no" before that. "They're all corn-fed, too, and the fattest porkers you ever see. It runs in the family to have good pigs. Stepnet pigs are always in demand. Everybody knows 'em by their looks."

"Do they resemble Deacon Stepnet?" asked Barbara.

The young man looked at her blankly.

"Oh, I see. It's a joke," he answered, and feebly laughed. "Well, I couldn't say as to that; but they've got the cutest faces—for pigs. Grandma Stepnet used to say it went agin her heart to have 'em killed, they was so sensible like. That's Stepnet church. Did you ever hear Rev. Mr. Porter?"

"Mr. who?" queried Barbara, her face a study.


He repeated the name.

"I really thought you said the Rev. Mr. Porker!" said Barbara, inwardly convulsed at the idea.

For a few moments the young man sat silent, resolving in his mind what subject he should take up next. His was one of those irrepressible tongues that under no circumstances can ever be kept quiet by their owners.

"Air you any relation to the Tinnikers?" he asked, after a short silence. "You look like S'lome Tinniker. Her father makes soap,—owns a big factory; and S'lome's rother good-looking, though gawky. They're rich. Got a splendid house, span 'o horses, villy in the country,—all made out o' soap. There's my place; good-by, miss, wish you a pleasant journey;" and to Barbara's great relief he was gone, and she was left alone to laugh at the recollection of his ridiculous speeches, or to cry if she chose at the dreary sense of desolation that was creeping over her.

Presently, with a strong effort of her will, she turned her attention to the scenery about her; *the sky* so rich in its summer colouring, the herb-



age freshened by recent rains, the flowers as bright as if newly painted by some invisible hand. On this side orchards loaded with the promise of fruit, stretching along to the deep, dark line of the woods, and from thence to the irregular hill-tops, yellow and gray and brown in the distance, flecked with shadows of gold.

It was yet early morning, and the atmosphere was clear and brilliant under the new miracle of sunshine that was bursting upon it. The trees fairly swarmed with singing birds. Now and then the little creatures skimmed along the green sward and darted close by the coach windows. The roads were red and moist, the wayside roses gave forth fragrance, as if they exulted in their power to shed their perfume upon the world. Later, the farmers came out and trooped to their work along the roads, their coats thrown over their shoulders, keeping company with their glittering scythes. Later, little children fluttered to school, the girls in their pretty blue and pink dresses and white pinafores. Later, for it was Monday morning, the women came out from their small households with pails in their hands which they filled at bubbling streams, or from old-fashioned wooden pumps, or, more laborious,

yet more picturesque still, from the moss-rimmed bucket of the well; and still later they were hanging out their snow-white linen on the lines. Barbara saw this likeness to her own drudgery, and shivered a little. She had never professed that she liked it, or that it was even endurable. Straightway she fell to counting the coming blessings, and among them the servants she would have. A bow golden with promise spanned all her anticipations, as if set there for a sign that she was done with the meaner drudgery of life. No question came as to the cares that might ensue, whether she should find happiness in this new life that ignored all the lowlier duties. How fragrant the air smelt, as a loaded hay-cart was just passing; then came market-wagons beautiful with heaped-up fruits and vegetables, and then there passed a long wagon lined with flags, from which gay pennons floated, and in which happy, rosy girls and boys sang and cheered everything they met on their way to the woods and the pleasures of a picnic. Barbara noticed every detail with an intentness that surprised herself, for these were all very common-place matters.

Again they stopped, this time in front of a

low-roofed country-house, painted red. There was an air of desolateness about the place that struck Barbara as with the change demanded by some sorrowful event. Two or three chairs stood in the small garden, and a carpet, rolled up and tied with rope, lay by the door. The windows were open and curtainless, and Barbara could see that the rooms below seemed stripped of their furniture. In answer to the impatient "hurry up" of the driver, a woman soon came down the narrow stairs of the cottage, leading a little wan child by the hand—a beautiful child, in spite of its pallor and poverty; the large eyes startled and wide open, the little pale lips grief-drawn and quivering.

By this time a small group had gathered outside.

"Is that Nancy's little gal?" asked a florid dame.

"Yes, poor mite," answered another, "and cruel hard it was for the widder to leave her. I reckon she lived months longer than she had any right to expect, she hated so to leave the little creeter. Ain't nobody a-going with her?"

"Thar's nobody to go," said the woman who had the child in charge; "but she's to be met by

her aunt; and this young woman," nodding to Barbara, "will jest see that she's comfitible, p'raps."

Barbara said certainly she would, and asked how far she was going.

"Only four miles, miss, jest this side o' the relroad. There's some seed-cake in this reticule, and a little watered milk in a bottle; but Cissy knows how to take care o' herself pretty well, don't you, Cissy dear? The little woman has had to all her life, and her poor mother too."

All this while they were putting the child on the seat opposite Barbara; then, with many a charge to the driver, the women moved away and stood looking long after the lumbering coach.

Barbara felt all her heart drawn out towards the little pale thing with the singularly premature yet beautiful face. She arranged her basket, gave her the most comfortable seat, and caught her breath as the child's eyes, so sorrowful yet so tearless, were raised to hers with a mute, pleading inquiry.

"Where are you going, dear?" she ventured to ask after a while.

"To my Aunt Mary's, Miss," was the low, *quiet answer.*

"So you are going to be her little girl, I suppose?"

"I don't know, Miss," and the large eyes looked troubled. "I'll never want to be anybody's little girl now mamma is gone. I ain't got nobody now—I'm all alone."

The pathetic voice, the almost unnatural composure, the pale, tender beauty of the face, quite broke down Barbara's composure. She drew the little orphan towards her, till the white cheek rested against her breast. Barbara was receiving one of the sweetest lessons in love. Her heart yearned to this bereaved child, and for the moment she wished it was in her power to give her a home.

Perhaps it might be. Her pulses quickened. While still shaping her plans, and indulging in her might be's, the horn sounded. The child started up with a look almost of terror and a long-drawn breath.

"Did you ever see your aunt, dear?" asked Barbara.

"No, Miss," was the answer, and the dark eyes were full of tears; "but mamma said I should love her."

And now the coach moved more slowly—

then stopped. At the gate of a tiny cottage almost hidden in vines, stood a slender, delicate-looking girl of not more than eighteen summers. Her print dress, chip hat, and a certain dainty air, impressed Barbara favourably. The little figure came forward.

"Is there a little child here from L——?" she asked, showing a sweet face under the shadow of the Gipsy hat.

"Yes, miss."

The driver sprang down, opened the coach door, had the child and the bag in his arms, had set them both in the road, and "dumped" the little trunk behind, as he said, almost before Barbara could think what was happening. But she caught sight of a benign old grandmotherly face in the little vine-covered porch, saw the pretty girl kiss her new charge as she almost knelt in the road to caress and embrace her, and whirled along by tree, bush, fence and field with a lighter heart, sure that the little waif had found loving friends and a happy home.



CHAPTER XIII

BARBARA'S RECEPTION AT MORTLAKE.

"Life is a waste of wearisome hours,
Which seldom the rose of enjoyment adorns;
And the heart that is soonest awake to the flowers,
Is always the first to be touched by the thorns."


AT last they stopped at a country station. Barbara stood on the platform, beside her unwieldy, unfashionable bag, watching the careless groups, coarse as well as careless. Many among them were without any pretension to refinement, and as Barbara encountered their broad, admiring glances, she began to feel a curious creeping of the nerves. She was easily excited, and unused to travel, and her mind had been on tension for a long stretch of time. A strange bewildering terror crept over her, and she felt as if she would have given worlds for some one to speak to. How she gained the car which bore the name of the place of her destination she hardly knew.

Somebody had lifted her, she was jostled and crowded, and finally found herself without a seat, and forced to catch hold of the first thing that offered to steady herself. That happened to be the shoulder of a gentleman.

"Oh, I beg your pardon," she said, blushing crimson, as he turned a thoughtful, refined face to see what had startled him so.

"Not at all, Miss; you should not be standing; allow me," and he sprang from his seat. "But I insist," he said with a pleasant smile as she drew back, and in another moment she found herself pleasantly seated, for an elderly gentleman near the window also insisted that she should avail herself of his place, and Barbara felt herself for a moment a person of some little importance.

Fortunately she did not need to change cars, so she sat back and enjoyed the scenery, putting out of her mind that last and greatest dread of all, meeting her relatives. She had settled, some time before, what she should say and what she would do. She remembered her aunt as she had seen her some years previously,—a pretty, gay little woman, taking but indifferent *interest* in household events, her chief pleasures



seeming to consist in eating, drinking, dressing and sleeping.

"She will be very unsocial, I suppose," Barbara said to herself; "and the two grown-up daughters, they may be glad to see me,—but Uncle Harper—I was always his favourite, and the girls were a little jealous. I wish I had written."

"At all events, they can do no less than take me in," she mused, smiling to herself, "for I can't very well go home the same night—and I'm as good as they are, and I *won't* be snubbed. There are things in the world that money can't buy, thank God!"

How they flew past the towns and villages, and great stretches of gray-green country, church-steeple, court-houses, dancing brooks, pretty cottages, fields, farms; each gliding away to make room for more steeples, and farms, and hills, and vales; and, over all, the wide, calm, blue sky brooded.

The day waned. Wonderful bars of brown and gold, amber, green, pale blue and violet, succeeded the slow sinking of the sun. Then came the first red glow of twilight—then the darkness of the early evening; and presently

the moon, as with the wand of some benignant spirit, transmuted the sombre shades to tints and broad swathes of silver light. The cars stopped in what seemed to be a break in the forest, for the trees closed all round the narrow footpath; a tiny stream wound its way at her feet, and Barbara felt again the sudden terror at her lonely and unprotected state. How glad she was when, looking up at the sound of a footstep, she saw the stranger who had given her his seat.

"I did not know we should arrive so late," she said, "and my uncle is not aware of my coming. Will you kindly direct me to Mortlake Farm?"

"Mr. Bennett's carriage is generally here," was the reply. "If you will walk on a little you may find it on the road. If not, my carriage is certainly here, and I drive directly past Mortlake." She followed him, till, at the further end of the platform, a sudden opening disclosed a wide street, a public house not far off, brilliantly lighted, and many pleasant residences, which the moonlight threw into bold relief.

There was but one carriage there, and into this Barbara was helped, and the queer old bag

stowed away under the seat. Barbara trembled with apprehension, now that the dreaded interview was so near. The gentleman pointed out many beautiful residences, but Barbara looked as one without eyes, and listened as one bereft of the faculty of hearing, until he said :

“ And now you can see the chimneys of Mortlake. It is by far the handsomest residence in the place, and Mr. Bennett has spared no expense to make both house and grounds attractive.”

Barbara shrank back. There was the place she was come to rob them of, and, for a moment, she felt all the remorse of actual treachery and theft. Then came the remembrance of the long years of penury and suffering ; her father's agonising illness, induced partly by the heartless conduct of his own brother ; the conviction that it was they who had been robbed, and kept out of this comparatively small patrimony.

“ It is right,” she said to herself as she drew nearer and nearer—but she had over-estimated her strength. Barbara at that moment would have given worlds, to be back home with her mother and her sisters. Her heart sank like lead in her bosom, as her friendly companion said :

“ I think you will have no trouble now, for

that is Mr. Harper Bennett, talking with a neighbour at the gate."

Mr. Harper Bennett looked up as the carriage drew nearer and stopped.

"Uncle," said Barbara, timidly, holding out her hand.

"What! Bab, is that you? Anything gone wrong? All well? Glad to hear it; you have quite taken me by surprise. Dear me, how you have grown. I'd have sent the carriage if I had known—thank you, Mr. Worcester, very kind, I'm sure—and did you come alone, Barbara?"

"Yes, uncle, quite alone."

She stood there in the moonlight, her bag on the ground. Mr Worcester had driven away, the neighbour who had been talking with Mr. Harper Bennett had gone.

"Well, this is a surprise," said her uncle, with a queer little cough; "father better, eh? I'm glad to hear it—wish you had written—however, it's all the same—all the same, of course. This your baggage? I'll just place it inside the gate and send Tom after it. Mrs. Bennett will be—ahem—pleased, of course—she was speaking of you to-day;" and again the queer little cough came into requisition.

Barbara's Reception at Mortlake. 149

There was no enthusiasm in this reception, certainly, but Barbara felt better. She was slowly regaining her customary balance, and she braced her nerves to go through with the duty she had undertaken. Two quaint old lines of a quaint old hymn kept singing through her brain :

“ The Lord can clear the darkest skies
And give us day for night.”

“ And you are all pretty well, Bab ? ” her uncle asked, in a forced voice, as he walked with long strides up to the house.

“ All pretty well, I thank you, uncle,” replied Barbara, smiling under cover of the night at his evident embarrassment.

“ And your father so much better, well, I never expected to hear that.”

“ Yes, sir ; he has changed very much since you saw him last,” said Barbara quietly.

“ Since—ah, yes—it’s quite a while—quite a while ; ” and he tried to laugh.

“ Five years, sir,” replied Barbara mercilessly.

“ Ah, so long as that ? I think you must be mistaken ; but then, perhaps not,” he added hastily, “ business men have scarcely an hour

to themselves, and my constant attention is demanded in the city."

"I suppose so, sir," said Barbara simply.

"It was very kind in you to come Bab, I'm sure—we must not try and forget each other, separated as we have to be. There is your aunt, I think, sitting at the window—she may be a trifle taken aback—not expecting company—ah, my dear!"

"My dear" arose and stood in the long open French window, a small delicate woman, with a face like one of those Paris wax dolls one sees in bazaars—eyes blue and light, hair flaxen, complexion milky, expression the least bit tigerish on occasions.

"This is our neice, Marie; you remember she was here when quite a child; Miss Barbara Bennett, come to pay us a little visit."

Mrs. Bennett appeared for a moment "taken aback," as her husband had said might be expected, and eyed Barbara from head to foot. Standing in the moonlight, her many flounces ruffled by the wind, she looked so weird and uncanny, that Barbara turned her glance away.

"Ah, Miss Bennett," and she nodded shortly, "*surprised*, I'm sure, so unexpected—quite a

pleasure — pray come in ; Mr. Bennett," she added, almost crossly, "wont you speak to one of the servants ? the bell is out of order."

Barbara comprehended, at once, in what relation the master of the house stood to its mistress ; her uncle moved away with alacrity to obey the given order.

"You will excuse us, I am sure, for not being in a state to receive company, as we received no intimation whatever, and—"

"I shall tax your hospitality but a short time, madam," Barbara said, stung by her manner more than her words.

"I wonder if Mr. Bennett will send Adams," continued Mrs. Bennett, with the same coldness and composure. "I think I had better go myself and see if there is a room for you—come this way, Miss Bennett—you can rest, if you wish."

Barbara was ushered into a handsome room, well lighted. Near the piano sat two pale girls, who looked up, and then arose in evident surprise as their step-mother entered, followed by Barbara.

"My dears, here is your cousin," said Mrs. Bennett languidly. "Miss Barbara, be seated."

"Dear me," drawled Belle, the eldest, "what a surprise!"

"Never should have known you," said Kate, shortly; then they took a survey of her costume, and were compelled to admire her beauty.

"After this, what?" thought Barbara, as the indignant blood crimsoned her cheeks. They never asked if she was fatigued—if she would take her hat off—whether she were hungry, though they must have known that she had been travelling all day, but, after the first effort, sat as if utterly oblivious of her presence, till their mother came to say that Adams would show Miss Barbara to her room. Then they could talk.

"Did you ever see such a figure?" said Kate.

"And such a hat? Noah's wife's milliner must have made it."

"What in the world has she come here for?" asked Kate languidly.

"To thrust herself on us, I suppose," was the reply.

"Wanted to see her rich relations," laughed Belle. "All I hope is, her stay will be short, and our friends will keep away. I should hate to present her, she is so evidently from the

country—and then that grand and mighty manner! you may be sure she wasn't half pleased with us."

"I don't intend she shall be," said her sister. "Don't you remember what a forward, disagreeable child she was when she came here, ever so long ago? I never disliked anything so much in my life. I expect she rates herself a beauty."

"She *is* rather good-looking," Belle rejoined indifferently, placing an extra cushion on the lounge. The utterance of the words belied the spirit in which they were spoken. At the first glance Belle, who was the handsomest of the sisters, envied Barbara the possession of her really rare beauty.

"Nonsense, she's vain and conceited; as to beauty, her features are too straight—I hate sameness. She looks like her mother—not a bit of our side of the family. What in the world possessed her to come here, without writing or giving a hint? I dare to say she will try to work on papa's sympathies—she has come for money, you may be sure."

"Precious little she will get, if I have anything to say," exclaimed Mrs. Bennett, who was as young as her youngest step-daughter.

Both Kate and Belle were small in stature, wore curls and frizzed hair in front, with immense coils twisted on the tops of their heads. Barbara's unfashionable coiffure, simply bands, and one small braid, together with her tall and slender figure, made her infinitely superior in appearance, and, in some subtle way, at first sight they felt her superiority. It is in small natures to hate that which they cannot reach, and these poor girls were quite destitute of all the sweet graces growing out of home culture. They were neither refined, nor amiable, nor beautiful, and it was not wholly their fault that the germs sown in their young hearts by careless and negligent hands had developed into vices that made them on some occasions seem unwomanly and ungenerous. They had known but little of Barbara, save that her family were very poor, and that she herself had been educated at their father's expense. Showy and superficial, they thought her like themselves, but they were mistaken. Barbara had thrown heart and soul into her studies—as why should she not, seeing that she hoped to better all their fortunes at home by the exercise of her gifts and attainments? So they sat there, and compla-

cently picked the poor girl to pieces. Her father was a bankrupt—her mother, inefficient, extravagant, and haughty.

When Harper Bennett came in, for a few moments, he was besieged with questions: "Why did she come? How long was she going to stay? Had she spoken of any motive yet?" to which he replied:

"I don't know why she came, or what she came for, but she is my brother's child, and she shall be well treated while she is under my roof."





CHAPTER XIV.

AT MORTLAKE.

"Vain human kind! fantastic race
Thy various follies, who can trace?"

MISS BENNETT'S room was ready. And such a room! She felt herself poor and despised indeed as she stood there, her eyes flashing with indignation as they took a slow survey. Almost bare of furniture, the soiled paper on the walls, the ragged carpet on the floor, two or three dirty dresses hanging from nails, every untidy article conclusively proved that it had been hastily vacated, and probably by one of the servants.

"It is shameful," reiterated Barbara, with flashing eyes. "They might at least treat their own flesh and blood with decent respect. I don't believe Uncle Harper dreams of this. It must be a servant's room, and not even cleanly."

Never mind, my kind aunt, your Nemesis is after you."

Revengeful thoughts were displacing her fears and doubts and tremors. At first she did not even struggle against them, but gloated over the purpose on which, she said to herself, a just God had sent her. That she should be thus negligently treated, roused her pride. She knew that in this spacious house were rooms enough for unexpected guests, where they were so numerous; and to be placed over the hot kitchen! To be thus needlessly insulted, exasperated her. Twice her hand was on the latch of the door, and her mind nearly made up to go down and say she would not sleep in such a place.

"Let's turn it into a romance," laughed Barbara, under a sudden impulse, as the matter took on a ridiculous aspect. "This is an enchanted place, and will turn into a palace by-and-by,—in a few hours, perhaps, days at the most. I'll show them what I can be to-morrow; they look upon me now as the poor country cousin, fit subject for their jibes and sports." It was well that things appealed to her sense of the ludicrous, else she might have spent the night in tears. So, as her anger had cooled, she

bathed her face, which grew yet warmer as one of the servants came in, sent by an afterthought, and threw the uncouth carpet-bag on the floor. As the girl caught a glimpse of Barbara standing there, her long hair unbound and flowing over her shoulders, enhancing her beauty, she started, her eyes widened, and her manner changed.

"Maybe ye'd like something," she said, a dash of respect in her manner; then she grew flushed and confused as Barbara's glance travelled slowly round the miserable room.

"Thank you; I don't wish for anything," and the girl went away wondering at her grand manner, wondering why the mistress had put her there, and if it were not a mistake.

Presently there was a tap at the door; the same servant stood there with a small tray on which were refreshments.

"Mr. Bennett told me to bring it, Miss," she said; and Barbara, motioning the tray to be placed on the table, allowed it to remain. She was even glad, for the sight of the dainty biscuit and the cool lemonade made her really hungry.

Placing the viands as near the window as

possible, she enjoyed them, looking out in the moonlight as she ate.

Down stairs went the girl, wondering.

"Why the mistress would put that fine gurl into Nan's bedroom I can't imadgine," she said to the other maids below. "Why she's just a quane, is she, as tall and handsome as any lady in the land. Well, well, it's quare intirely, for there's more rooms ready fixed nor they know what to do wid, sure."


Barbara slept soundly on her rude pallet, and was roused in the morning by the ringing of the hall bell. The aspect of things by the light of day gave a new impulse to her irritation, and she promised herself that she would sit up all night rather than sleep again in such a pen. She made her toilet with much pains, changing the effect of her pretty travelling dress by adding a jaunty little white apron, and wearing blue ribbons in her hair and at her throat.

So fair and stately was the beautiful girl who came gliding into the breakfast-room the next morning, that Mrs. Bennett, who looked upon her with jealousy and suspicion, was forced to throw a little respect into her manner, while the step-daughters eyed her askance, and tried to

assume an air of patronage, failing miserably in the attempt.

Emma, the golden-haired darling of the family, a child of six summers, and the daughter of the present Mrs. Bennett, whose idol she was, made ample amends, however, by falling in love with her cousin at first sight. She was a lovely creature, with heaven's own blue in her eyes, and an expression like that of some sweet angel strayed down to earth, only lent for a little time. What the child would have been in other hands, and under firm, gentle discipline, who can tell? As it was, the natural goodness of her disposition prevented her from being utterly spoiled. Her frankness had in it a touch of rudeness, as she had never been thwarted in her wishes or opposed in her will. Barbara felt her heart go out towards the beautiful child, and it made her task comparatively easier to find under this inhospitable roof something to love.

The morning passed in utter loneliness, for she was left to herself, while her cousins excused themselves on the plea that they had a dress-maker in the house and were very busy. Barbara read till luncheon-time; her uncle had not yet made his appearance. At that time the



three ladies came in, radiant in toilettes of white muslin. Barbara had never seen such lovely dresses, and thought of the faded old calico frocks at home, with which her sisters and herself had been obliged to content themselves. Her uncle was very gracious, helping her to the best of everything, talking largely of his plans—the bank, mortgages, new blocks—talking rapidly, as if to leave no time for thought. After lunch he went out on the lawn to smoke. It was his saloon. Mrs. Bennett would not allow even a smoking-room on the premises, that is, in the house. Barbara would have followed, to get a word with him, but the little child detained her.

“Do you curl your hair in papers?” she asked, as Belle and Kate sauntered to the windows near by.

“No, dear,” was the answer.

“Oh, Belle does; you ought to see how funny she looks when she goes to bed.”

“Em,” said Belle, sharply, “you are a little chatterbox. Hold your tongue.”

“No, I won’t. I’ll talk to my new cousin. She’s mine, and I like her. I love you,” she added, artlessly, “because you are so pretty; ever so much prettier than Belle or Kate.”

"My dear, you must not say that," said Barbara, feeling rather than seeing the wrathful looks that were cast at her.

"Em,"—Kate spoke this time—"I shall tell your mamma to have you taken out of the room."

"My mamma won't mind you," was the pert reply.

Barbara felt like flying, but she forced herself to be calm. The next question took her by surprise.

"Is your papa decayed?"

"Decayed! what do you mean?" asked Barbara, her quick temper flashing to her eyes.

"Why, mamma said he was a decayed merchant," replied little Emma.

"You ridiculous child!" cried Belle. But Barbara, in that new flush of consternation, could see that the idea amused them. Her red lips trembled. She felt as if she were being insulted at every step; and putting the child hastily aside, she moved through the open window outside of which her uncle stood talking, having finished his cigar, to his wife. Barbara paused for a moment to calm her excited feelings. From some words she caught, she felt assured that they

were talking about her. Another moment, and she moved quietly forward.

"Uncle," she said, waiting till he was at liberty, "when can I see you on a matter of business?"

"Business, Bab? why, any time; just now, if ——"

"Not here, if you please, uncle," said Barbara, quietly; it is very important. I should like to see you by yourself in the office."

She felt her aunt's cold eyes on her face, saw the expression of wonder, the toss of the head, that indicated both surprise and contempt.

"Your uncle is always busy, Miss Bennett," said his wife.

"I shall take but very little of his time," said Barbara, coldly.

"Will it do when I return from the city?" asked Mr. Bennett, after a moment of thought.

"Yes sir," Barbara replied.

"Very well," meet me in the study, then. Let me see," he took out his watch. "Now I think of it, I shall be detained in the city to-night. Say to-morrow night at eight, then, I'll make the appointment special."

"Thank you, uncle," said Barbara, and went into the house without looking at her aunt.

Such a day as it was to proud Barbara Bennett! She registered every look in the hand-book of her memory, and treasured every unlucky word, whether it was chosen to wound or not. Never had she felt so utterly humiliated, or so contemptuous towards her kind. If it had not been for the unselfish attentions of the sweet little child, who could not be coaxed from her side, she would have felt utterly discouraged and defeated.

All the unhappiness she had at first felt, in the consciousness that she was to dispossess them of this pleasant country home, vanished like dew before the morning sun. She longed to turn upon them at the renewal of each petty slight, and say, "You are trespassing on my forbearance; you are living on my property. I could turn you out to-morrow;" and she thought with exultation of the little red box in the pocket of her bag where the important document was lying, which was to give these people into her power.

She had quite forgotten her promise of that night when her heart was first led to look for guidance from her Heavenly Father. She had, *alas!* lost the sweet humility that had character-

ised her since then, and become proud and lifted up. She began to exult in her beauty, to think of and long for splendours that had hitherto been unattainable; to feel, in fact, as if all of comfort and blessing this world could mete out to her would fall to her lot in the possession of Mortlake.

It was a glorious inheritance. The wood upon tens of acres was centuries old. The land had been steadily improved by competent farmers and labourers. The house was almost palatial in its appointments, and possessed all the modern improvements. The situation was one of the finest in the state. Nowhere were there more gracious fields, healthier forests, finer views, or richer water-courses. Since the discovery of coal, its value had been doubled, and a good market value was beginning to have its influence in Barbara's eyes.

It was easy to see that Harper Bennett built great hopes upon it. The girls and the second wife thought it beyond all price for a country residence.

"I wouldn't live here all the year round if it was as beautiful as Paradise," Bell said. "It has its charms for the summer, of course; but

then nobody lives in town during that season, and it's quite *de trop* to remain there, even if one don't like the country."

Barbara began mentally to calculate the chances whether she might not spend her winters in the city. So fast and so far had the greed of possession carried her. It was a very worldly Barbara, after all; a Barbara that would be very likely to ape the silliest fashions, wear the finest clothes, and fall into whatever the exigencies of the age demanded. But Barbara must bide her time. As the twilight came on, she sat dressed in her black silk near the piano. The silk was country-made, to be sure, but the perfection of Barbara's figure diminished the imperfections which quick, city-bred eyes would not be slow to notice. Her cousins, who had condescended to ask her some small questions over their tatting, were sitting not far off, both superbly dressed, and yet neither of them approached Barbara's incomparable loveliness, and they knew it. Little Emma flitted from one part of the room to another, amusing them all by her childish prattle, but most of the time she kept by Barbara's side.

"Belle is ugly," she said, coming up to Bar-

bara, "and won't play me any music. "She says she won't play for me if I love *you* best—and I do, so there!"

Bell laughed a low, spiteful-sounding laugh.

"Tell the truth, dear," she said.

"But that is not kind," Barbara responded, whose love of justice always came uppermost. "They are your sisters, and I am only your cousin."

"But you are a great deal nicer."

This time Barbara could not forbear laughing, the sprite was so comical in her earnestness.

"Won't you play for me?" begged the little one.

"How do you know I play, dear?" asked Barbara, softly.

"Oh, because mamma said so; she said papa paid for it," innocently added the child.

Barbara's cheeks flushed hotly as she became conscious of a subdued titter on the part of her cousins. She held her temper bravely down, however, though she was in a fever.

"Yes, dear, I can play; and your papa was kind enough to pay for my learning, for which generosity I hope to reimburse him some day," she said, the latter clause being intended for the

benefit of the elder sisters. "What shall I play? What would you like me to play?"

"Oh, something nice; something very quick and loud. Kate only plays slow pieces," said the child.

Barbara looked round.

"There's one of Chopin's on the piano," said Belle, and her voice had a strong flavour of sarcasm. "It's very difficult, though,—Kate gave it up. Perhaps you will attempt it."

"Certainly I will," said Barbara, smiling. "Little Emma, I am going to play for *you*," and she walked to the piano like a queen.

How she played! What large rendering! what wonderful compass! Every note was informed, overflowing with soul. Never had that particular music found such interpretation in that house before. Not a shade of expression in the brilliant, startling variations was missing. The two girls grew almost gray with envy, yet they sat still in breathless admiration, which they easily concealed. The little child stood by her side, watching with wondering eyes. She was very fond of music.

"Have you any other difficult piece, Cousin Belle?" asked Barbara, turning round triumphantly.

"Choose for yourself," was the answer, sharply given; "there's a rack full."

Barbara would have left the instrument, but the soft pressure of the little hand detained her, and she felt attracted towards her and willing to gratify her smallest wish. So she sat there and played some of her favourites, conscious all the while that her cousins would never attempt to touch the piano in her presence after that.

"I trust you think I made good use of my advantages," she was unwise enough to say.

"Very," replied Belle, dryly. "You'd make a capital teacher."

"So Mrs. Bennett said," and Barbara left the music stool. "The only reason I don't do it is because there is really no need, I suppose," she added.

"Oh, indeed!"

"Ladies, whose music did I hear just now? That was the touch of a finished performer."

"Oh, Mr. Worcester!" exclaimed Belle, rising with alacrity, her face all smiles. "This is my cousin" (she ignored the question), "pray be seated."

"Miss Barbara, I hope you have not forgotten

me," continued the gentleman, going cordially towards her. "We have been acquainted some time," he added, with an amused smile at the astonishment visible on the faces of the sisters.

"No, indeed, Mr. Worcester," said Barbara, instantly regaining her self-possession, though her cheeks were flushed a little.

"Did you know my cousin Barbara before?" fluttered Emma. "She's one of the sweetest, nicest cousins you ever saw in your life; and she plays better than Professor Blaus. She only played for *me*."

"So it was her I was listening to, outside the window?"

"To be sure," replied Emma, with increased importance. "Did you ever hear such music in your life?"

"I was exceedingly pleased; won't you ask her if she will try something else for you?"

Barbara saw an expression in Belle's eyes which she did not like, and yet which set her heart beating with exultant throbs.

"They shan't despise me, whatever they do," she said to herself; and still she would fain have retired from the room. She resisted the child's entreaties.

"I have been using the instrument for some time, tell Mr. Worcester," she said, half playfully. "It is your sister Belle's turn now."

Belle grew pale and her eyes flashed.

"We do not intend to be put to disadvantage for your interest," she said, losing command of her temper; then she added, with a hard laugh, "Mr. Worcester, our cousin's attainments are far beyond our poor efforts. She is quite a prodigy, I assure you."

"I am only very fond of music," said Barbara, quietly, hoping to turn the shaft that was aimed at her, and restore good humour. "And as I have played for my cousins, it is no more than fair that they should play for me."

"Oh, we would not attempt it after such an exhibition as yours," said Kate, with studied politeness.

"I see I shall have to waive all claims," said Mr. Worcester, with a peculiar smile, seating himself at the instrument, "so I will give you some very poor music."

"Now he'll sing," exclaimed Emma, clapping her hands. His touch was exquisite; though he played scarcely more than chords, yet there was a delicacy of grace and finish which are some-

times wanting in the finest performers, as, accompanying himself, he sang:

“ All there be,
 Made for me,
Cherry blossom and apple-tree,
Nectarines in sunny lanes,
Every beautiful dye that veins
Rose-bud leaf or lily heart,
I can sip and drain a part
Of all their delicate sweetnessees,
Fairest, jolliest life mine is.

“ Gardens gay,
 Far away,
Rich with vines and bright with bees,
Cool with grasses and thick with trees,
Mine by airy flights I make.
The purple flesh of the plum I take,
To colour my little plumes that grew
From painted fruit and pearly dew.

“ Many I see,
 Watching for me,
But best of all are the grandams old,
And red-cheeked babies with locks of gold,
And gentle women, who love to see
Our birdie younglings where'er they be,
For these we sing, as our way we wing
Where crocus, lily, and lilacs spring.

“ As my hymn,
 At twilight dim,
I chirp and warble from chesnut limb,
Sometimes a pair of lovers shy
Kiss and coo right under my eye ;
But I never tell, I laugh as I rest,
And tuck my head down under my breast,
And wink at the sight not meant for me,
For I'm only a humming-bird, you see.”

"There!" he laughed, as he turned away.

Barbara's eyes were full of tears. Strange, that under the influence of that simple little song all her harsher judgments, all her self-sufficiency seemed to melt away. She was, once more, only unambitious Barbara Bennett, under the blossoms of the apple-tree that grew in the great ungainly yard at home; only Barbara, bending over the tub and rinsing the clothes as she hummed some familiar home-ditty; only Barbara, sitting in the twilight or the moonlight beside Floss and June, humble lover and earnest admirer. Home came to her there, with the old, sweet flavour of homely duties, the cares made precious for the sake of others, the little self-denials that grew out of the *largesse* of love in which the strong and the feeble were alike enfolded. It did her good, that little episode, made her more gentle, and less exultant that she was in a measure superior to her cousins in accomplishments.

Mr. Worcester did not remain long. He often came over, the girls gave Barbara to understand.

"We hadn't the remotest idea you knew him," Belle said, when he had gone.

"Pray, where did you meet him?" echoed Kate.

"On the cars," said Barbara, shortly.

Her good genius seemed to have disappeared with Mr. Worcester. She felt herself in the power of her cousins, who could not forgive her superiority, and dreaded their sneers and their tongues.

"Shall I see Mrs. Bennett again to-night?" she asked, looking out into the moonlight.

"Mamma went to bed ever so long ago," said Emma, "and there is nurse after me, I expect. I'm not going till you do," and the child clung lovingly to Barbara.

"Did you wish to see her for anything particular?" Belle had the grace to ask.

Barbara was so angry with herself that the tears would come, and that something in her throat choked her painfully. She had intended to speak to Mrs. Bennett about the room, but she could not bring herself to say so in her present frame of mind.

"It doesn't matter," she said, after a brief silence; "it will do to-morrow." Yet when the child had kissed her and gone, she could hardly bring herself to go up-stairs; and when she gained the little bed-chamber, she found it carefully swept, and made as attractive as was possible.

"The very servants took pity on me," she said, seating herself at the window to think over the probabilities of the coming interview, and almost determining that she would sit there till morning, rather than do violence to her own self-respect. But better and gentler thoughts came as the moments flew. The beauty of the night softened her soul and prepared it for communion with her Heavenly Father, of whom she humbly asked pardon for all sins of commission and omission as she sought her rest.





CHAPTER XV.

THE INTERVIEW.

"But Satan now is wiser than before,
And tempts by making rich, and making poor."

IN the wings of the wind, the news that Bab had gone to see about a "little property" had been freely circulated in her own town. "A fortune had fallen to the Bennetts," before it had been talked of an hour, and everybody was discussing the news, from the minister down to the street scavenger. Barbara little knew of the commotion she had raised by the few words she had let fall in Mrs. Esty's little shop. Florence came home filled with an innocent vanity, because everybody she met had been so kind, and said such pleasant things of Barbara.

"Who would think they would miss any of us?" was her delighted comment. "After all

it will be harder to leave, if we do go, than we thought."

"Another day," murmured Barbara, as she awoke at early dawn and left her uncomfortable surroundings with all the haste that was possible. It was very early—just the most delightful hour to see the real wealth of the treasure that seemed almost her own. Nobody was in her way as she went down the wide staircase, hat in hand. Little Emma, fresh from the hands of her nurse, stood on the porch.

"What! up so early?" asked Barbara, as the child, with a glad cry, ran towards her.

"Yes, are you going to walk? and may I go too? You needn't come, nurse, Miss Cousin will take care of me," she laughed back to the broad-faced German girl who was very glad to be relieved of the—to her—unpleasant task of walking.

It was delightful to Barbara to move slowly down the shady garden paths with so sweet a companion. Barbara felt that she was not looked upon with favour by any other member of the family, but she little dreamed of the enmity nursed in the bosom of the mistress of this fair domain. She hated the very presence

of her husband's neice, because warned by a subtle sense that she had come to ask some favour of her husband, and she had always made a point of being miserable because of the little annuity he had already settled upon his brother. Suppose the family should be thrown for entire support upon Harper Bennett?

Being a miser at heart, she grudged the giving away of a penny—having been forced to endure humiliations in her youth, she hated poverty, and, as a matter of course, looked down upon, snubbed, and, if she could, humiliated those she fancied were under any obligations to her. Thoroughly ignorant of all the nobler virtues, nay more, unprincipled and naturally vicious, she had never scrupled to do any meanness that might further her own projects. Barbara's grace and beauty and high breeding astonished and angered her, for she aspired to be a beauty and a leader of fashion.

"I wish you lived here all the time," said little Emma, pausing under a lovely arbour covered with grape-vines, with which the branching wisteria had entertwined, showing its wealth of purple blossoms side by side with the curling tendrils of faintest green.

"Why do you wish I lived here?" asked Barbara, coming out of a reverie which had recalled the home where Florence baked and broiled, and June wrote poetry—and where she was sure they were talking and thinking of her.

"Because you are so good to me."

"They are all good to you, little blossom," said Barbara, stopping and kissing her.

"No, indeed," and the child shook her head wisely, "they are cross to me, all except nurse and papa. Mamma hugs me sometimes, but then she scolds me awfully if I tumble my dresses, or get the least spec of dirt on them—or if I muss her collars or speak to her when she don't want me to. What a soft, pretty silk yours is! mamma's dresses always make such a noise!"

Barbara smiled, thinking how long ago the rustle had worn out of this old silk, but it pleased her that the child admired it. They walked on to a beautiful eminence crowned with magnificent elms, and wherever she looked, she saw her father's acres—the lovely, rolling country God had given them. In near view stood a picturesque old mill, its slant sides to the west flashing as if covered with plates of gold.

Narrow rivulets, as blue as heaven, ran between banks of emerald, deep shadow-covered glades seemed to invite one to the softest repose.

"Beautiful, beautiful!" she murmured.

"Don't you know they have picnics here!" said the child, whose sparkling eyes proved that she shared in her cousin's admiration—"oh, such lots of people and children come! sometimes poor little children and sometimes nice ones, and they put up swings, and set tables in the groves, and eat their dinners on the grass, oh, it is all so pretty! We walk out here and see them sometimes, but mamma says we mustn't mix with them—I wish I could, 'cause you see I don't have many little girls to play with."

"How often do they come?" asked Barbara.

"Sometimes every day in the week," replied Emma, "and papa gets lots of money for it, for they all pay him."

Barbara's cheeks flushed. To own Mortlake was a fortune then, what with the coal and the picnics—what would her uncle not do to keep it?

It seemed to her that her aunt and cousins were more ungracious than ever, through the long hours of that day.

Barbara spent as much time as possible out of doors. There were no frowns there, no unkind words or glances. She had been bitterly disappointed at her reception. That she might seem strange to them at first, was to be expected; but that they should treat her with downright incivility, astonished and angered her. She met her uncle at the gate towards evening, and he was kind and sociable, though she never had seen so many hard lines in his face before.

"I've not forgotten that you wish to see me, Bab," he said, as he went in; "I shall be quite at liberty at eight."

It was not without trepidation that Barbara sought her uncle at the time appointed. She had never, to her recollection, certainly never under such circumstances, sat face to face with him before. Unconsciously she studied him while he arranged his papers, after handing her a chair—his hard face, heavy jaws, deep-set eyes, lofty, narrow forehead, all denoted the hard, determined, unflinching man of business. There was nothing of her father's delicate, thoughtful reticence—of his sweet smile, or kindly assuring manner, in her Uncle Harper.

At last the papers seemed to suit him. He

took one turn across the room—came back, seated himself, lifted an ivory folder, and turned squarely toward her.

"I suppose—I think I can guess what you are come to say," he said, looking at her uneasily, his glance still a little abstracted.


"No, uncle, I don't think you can," she made reply, feeling the blood flush all her face and then recede as quickly.

"You know—at least I have decided that it is quite impossible for me to increase the allowance I made your father—if I do, it will be but a small addition, a very small addition."

"I have not come to ask you that, Uncle Harper," and Barbara's voice grew stronger. "I wish, indeed, we had never needed it. It is very hard—" and here Barbara felt her voice growing unsteady, and bit her lip violently to punish herself.

"Of course it is hard, poverty and all that; your father was never very worldly-wise, or he would have held his own, after some fashion."

"Remember, Uncle Harper," said Barbara, indignantly, "you were well provided for by grandfather Bennett, who bequeathed to my father scarcely a pittance."



"Because he saw that property left to him might be only wasted," said her uncle, moving uneasily.

"O, Uncle Harper! you know papa was unfortunate," said Barbara, tears in her eyes, for the trials in which she had been a sharer seemed to rush over her in one mighty flood.

Then the less unfortunate men have left them, the better, he said heartlessly.

Barbara was slowly nerving herself for what she had to say. It was well, she thought, that he had spoken as he had. She did not pity him now.

"Mrs. Bennett told you I wrote you a letter, I suppose," she said.

"Yes," he coloured a little, "yes, I heard of that."

"But did not read it yourself, perhaps."

"No—no; I did not read it. I was very pressed with business—and, besides, I leave all that sort of correspondence with my wife."

"That sort—" thought Barbara, and her lips went together.

"When I received her answer I determined that I would come here and see you."

"I am very glad you came;" he moved uneasily

in his seat again. "I hope they make you comfortable," he added.

"Well—as comfortable as I can be in one of the servant's bed-rooms—over the kitchen range," she said quietly.

"Where have they put you?" he asked.

Barbara described the room. Before she had finished he caught at the bell-pull.

"Have my neice's things removed to the front spare room," he said to the housekeeper who answered his ring. That made Barbara's task harder.

How should she break tidings for which he was utterly unprepared to this unsympathetic man? How could she tell the master of these broad acres that this noble home belonged to her father?

"Uncle Harper," she questioned rapidly, "suppose you lost Mortlake; would you then be a poor man?"

"That's a curious thing to ask," he said, bending his brows as he turned to her.

"But if you did not own Mortlake, would you be still a rich man?"

"I really can't imagine what you are driving at, child. I had no idea of speaking of business

matters at all," he said, impatiently. "Perhaps I should still be what men call rich, without Mortlake—what then? You have no idea of the calls that are made upon me, or how much of the money of a man continually investing is locked up, and almost all the time as absolutely out of his reach as if he had none whatever."

"I am glad to know you would still be wealthy, Uncle Harper, as I believe you would"—then Barbara stopped, grew pale, and drew a long breath—"for I—have something to tell you that will—astonish you."

"Ah, pray what is it?" and he smiled almost superciliously. As if this girl from the country could astonish him!

"It is this, Uncle Harper," and she spoke hurriedly now. "A will, or a codicil, or whatever it may be called, made just before my grandfather died, and giving Mortlake to my father, has been found."

The man grew white to his very lips.

"A will—a what—been found—where?"

"You remember who took care of my grandfather when he was ill?"

He did not answer.

"You remember the clock that stood upon

the shelf over the fire-place and opposite his bed—”

His hand trembled now—the folder fell to the table, but he lifted it up again.

Barbara’s heart was beating so fast that it shook her voice.

“Papa wanted the clock, you remember,” she began again, “and he took it home—well, the paper was found in that.”

“Do you take me for a fool, Barbara Bennett?” came through his closed teeth—“to believe a story like that without the clearest proof?”

Barbara took something from her pocket.

“There is a copy of it, Uncle Harper.” She almost pitied him, he seemed so shaken; his fingers trembled as if they were palsied, as he took it and read it mechanically.

“Not the slightest faith in it—it means nothing—it’s a hatched-up lie,” he exclaimed savagely—“this is managed by your precious father.”

“Uncle Harper!” Barbara rose.

“Don’t put on your tragedy airs to me,” he responded, his voice almost hoarse. “It’s a trumpery made-up thing, of a piece with your father’s general management.”

"Uncle, I decline to have anything more to say about it," replied Barbara, growing calmer as his excitement culminated. "I thought you might be reasonable, and kind, and gentlemanly—but, as it is, I shall put it into the proper hands for adjustment."

"And you have the original of that—bosh!"

"Yes, I have it with me," she said, unguardedly, and then suddenly felt that she had made an imprudent admission.

"You'll not object to letting me see it," he said, growing calmer. Barbara turned cold in the effort that was now required of her.

"No, uncle—I cannot let it go out of my hands," she said firmly.

"Then you don't dare to trust me?"

"I am only doing as I was advised."

"By that precious father of yours."

Barbara was silent.

He sat there for a few moments utterly undecided. When he looked up, there was fury in his eyes, contempt in his voice.

"See here, Bab," he said, "I am not a bit uneasy about this matter. Possession is conceded to be nine-tenths of the law, and I am in possession here. Since my father's death—and he

knew what he was doing when he gave Mortlake to me—I have expended more than ten thousand dollars upon the house and grounds. Do you think I am going to give that up quietly?”

“But you have received back more than that, I was given to understand, in the revenues the coal found here has produced.”

“No, that is neither here nor there, I am talking to you now of what the place has cost me in dollars and cents. Now this matter, although I believe it to be the merest bosh, may be troublesome, even if it is a put-up job. I hate law and all that pertains to it, and I’m willing to lose something rather than incur any such trouble. Suppose I settle a handsome sum upon your father and we cry quits. I am willing to—to—”

“Buy us off, Uncle Harper.”

“Buy you off—you—beggars! cried her uncle, no longer able to keep even the semblance of good temper.

“I wouldn’t compromise for a hundred thousand dollars, Uncle Harper.”

“Very well, my young lady,” sneered her uncle, “then do your worst. I am rich, well-

known, respected ; my word is my bond ; your father is unfortunate, penniless, and paralytic—and—it has never been quite cleared up whether or not he is in league with that scamp of a son, your brother, who managed to make away with the sum of ten thousand dollars.”

“Silence, Uncle Harper,” said Barbara, with flashing eyes, “you have said quite enough about my father, and I have lost all the respect for you I ever had. You gained your wealth by cunning and an overbearing will, and now you condescend to insult my poor, honest father, who would have cut his right hand off sooner than do the mean actions you have been guilty of. It is enough, I think, that God has afflicted him, without this added wretchedness. Say what you will to me, but I will not allow you to insult my dear father—my honoured father.”

There was something in her tone, her look, her manner, that for a moment awed the mercenary man before her ; and he stood there, silent, glowering at her.

“Very well, Miss Barbara Bennett ; listen,” he said at last, “I abate not one jot or tittle of all I have spoken. And now we understand one another—though I am a fool to waste words

upon a girl—" he added sneeringly. "But I will just say for the last time, the thing is a put-up job from beginning to end, and let me tell you I shall fight it tooth and nail. Mortlake is mine, every inch of it, and no earthly power can take it from me, do you hear? No earthly power can take it from me."

"Perhaps God can, Uncle Harper."

The low, solemn voice—the pure, serene face, now deadly pale, looking into his, shook the hard man of the world more than he would ever have dared to confess.

"We'll see who gets it," he said, again turning nervously to his papers; "but remember, I'll fight!"

"And so will I, Uncle Harper."

"You!" he turned and gave her such a look that Barbara trembled, but she did not lose her courage.

"Yes, I speak for my father," she said, slowly. "You have been living in prosperity all these years, Uncle Harper, while my poor unfortunate father, sick and disabled, has suffered all but death. You have known how we were ground down, and what did you do that a brother should? True, you educated me, and I thank

you for it, but was I not sent home altogether unfitted for my station, among uncongenial surroundings, to see those I loved almost suffering for the necessities of life, and to be unable to aid them pecuniarily because I was needed to work and care for the rest? Now that we have discovered this secret, which enriches us but does not impoverish you, I think you ought to be glad, Uncle Harper. You can't carry Mortlake with you into another world, you *can* carry a consciousness of having dealt fairly and honourably by those of your own flesh and blood."

He looked at her standing there in the majesty of innocence and beauty, and he answered her with an oath.

She turned instantly and left the room, every sense outraged, and so injured that every breath seemed to choke her. On her way she met the servant who had answered her uncle's summons, who at her request conducted her to her new sleeping-room.





CHAPTER XVI

IN THE SPARE ROOM.

"O such a day,
So fought, so followed, and so fairly won!"

MR. BENNETT sought his wife's presence as Barbara left him. She was sitting in the moonlight, and the air was heavy with the sweet scents of many flowers that came up from the garden below.

"What is it, Harper? how pale you look!" she said, as he came towards the window.

"What do you think that girl came here for?" he asked in hoarse tones.

"Who, Barbara? I don't know, I'm sure, no good. I always disliked her. Perhaps she has asked you for a small gift in money—a thousand dollars or so. Harper, don't give her a cent—not one cent—a girl as able to work as she is."

"You've guessed wide of the mark," was his answer. "She came to rob us of Mortlake."

"To rob—Harper, what do you mean? I never heard such a crazy thing—I can't even imagine what you mean."

"Why, they have found a will of later date than the one that gave me Mortlake—in an old clock—that used to stand in my father's room—I—I've seen a copy of it."

"Harper! you can't believe it."

"It would hardly be for my interest to do it," he said, with a constrained laugh. "She brought the will with her."

"Where is it?"

"I don't know."

"And she showed you a copy?"

"Yes."

"What are you going to do."

"Fight," he said, with closed teeth.

"Mortlake," murmured the woman, drearily—"she take beautiful Mortlake away from us—my home—the place I like most in all the world—how ridiculous about the will, Harper—there isn't the shadow of a chance, is there?" She turned a pale face towards him.

"Heaven knows—no, of course not," for the
N

expression of her face at these words frightened him. "There's forgery or trickery of some kind about it."

"Why didn't you make her show you the real will, Harper? You might at least have told whether it was in your father's handwriting."

"She was quite too well advised to do that," said Mr. Bennett, in a bitter voice.

"Hark! what is that? Who is there in the next room, Harper?"

"She is there," was his answer.

"What! Barbara, in my best room? I won't have her there."

"Stop, dear," said Mr. Bennett, as his wife arose, "I ordered the girl to take her baggage there, before I knew of this thing. She might as well stay—to-morrow she will undoubtedly go home."

"I won't have her there, Harper, the false, ungrateful creature!" and on the usually placid face of Mrs. Bennett there was the look which made him almost afraid of her. "The other place was too good for her."

"There's no use in making a fuss now," said Mr. Bennett. "She will undoubtedly leave here to-morrow—let her stay; she can do us no harm."

Mrs. Bennett's hand fell at her side. She had been in the act of pulling the bell-rope—now suddenly came a new expression in the face so almost distorted before, and she stood there quietly, without seeming to know that her husband was vainly striving to decipher the expression of her countenance.

"Let her stay," she said quietly, "perhaps, as you say, it is just as well, just for to-night," and she glided quietly back to her seat by the window.

It was a large, square room in which Barbara found herself, and evidently intended for guests of distinction. The girl smiled bitterly as she threw herself into the silk-lined easy-chair, but still her heart throbbed with a curious sense of triumph.

"It is all over at last," she said, wearily; "to-morrow I must go home and tell them—it will be so hard! but no matter, it can be put into the hands of a lawyer—and Belle's father will gladly help us, he is a judge. I wonder if Uncle Harper is not sorry enough by this time that he sent me in here," she continued, taking in all the handsome decorations of the best spare room at a glance. "How dreadful he was! what wicked

looks, and what a terrible oath! It rings in my ears yet."

She shuddered at the recollection of both glance and oath.

"I had rather live in our old rookery with clean hands, than own all New York City and feel as he does," she said, as she still soliloquized. To-morrow I must go home. It seems as if I had been here a month—of course we couldn't expect Uncle Harper to give up Mortlake at once—that could not be in human nature—but he might have been kind—might have been reasonable. It will be ours in time—I know it will—it must. No earthly power can take it from us."

She arose and went to the window. She stood there a long time, looking at the cool, blue sky, in which myriads of those blessed lights we call stars glowed with more than usual radiance.

"I wonder if I have fought this battle well?" she asked herself, as at last she prepared to retire. "I'm afraid the feeling of exultation with which I spoke to Uncle Harper was not right—I'm afraid I was vain and passionate—ah me! how hard it is, after all, to do just what *is* right. These wicked, revengeful feelings get

the better of us. I'm sure there were moments to-night when I hated Uncle Harper, bitterly, in my heart—and the spirit of hate is the spirit of murder," she added, solemnly. "I do try—but these earthly feelings come over me, and I forget all the good things I have been trying to do—forget that I am a child of Jesus, and striving to live for a better world. When these people look down upon me, the very basest feelings and desires rise in my heart; it is useless to disguise it—I want to do something that will shame and even annihilate them. It is dreadful—how dreadful in thy sight, O God, who hast told us to pray for them that despitefully use us. Oh, help us to do so—help me," and she fell on her knees and prayed fervently.





CHAPTER XVII


BARBARA'S DREAM.

"When sleep's calm wing is on my brow,
And dreams of peace my spirit lull,
Before me, like a misty star,
That form floats dim and beautiful."

BARBARA'S dreams were unusually pleasant after the stormy interview that threatened so seriously the prospects of an entire family. She dreamed that her father was in perfect health, and that they were all living in a palace-like home upon the banks of a lovely river, over which the drooping branches of beautiful willow-trees hung, and in whose sparkling depths water-lilies, like snow and gold, swayed this way and that, and all the leaves looked like goblets of emerald. She thought that, on expressing a wish to possess one of these crystal-like goblets, somebody, who she could not see, said in a familiar voice

"I will bring you one," and something shooting past her sprang into the water. With a terrible fear she cried aloud, when suddenly the shinning water parted again, and there, crowned with lilies, and his hands full of emerald goblet-like leaves, came up her brother Philip, as glowingly beautiful in her eyes as a mortal man could be. With a quick, loud cry of rapture, she sprang towards him, felt herself held in his embrace, felt his kisses, and those of the wet lilies on her hands and forehead, inhaled the delicious perfume, and at that instant was wide awake.

Her bed was on the right-hand side of the door that led from the hall, in a large alcove. At the extreme end of the room, on the same side, was another door, that led into Mrs. Bennett's bed and dressing-room. At the foot of the bed, a heavily-curtained window faced her as she opened her eyes, the dim light giving to the disarranged drapery a peculiarly weird effect. While Barbara was drowsily, yet curiously, trying to make out the figure that seemed to be standing between her and the window, she was conscious of a rustling sound in the room, as of some one moving lightly but hastily. A second longer, and there was the sound of a door opened



and shut as nearly without noise as possible. Still too sleepy to reason correctly, the noise yet made an impression on Barbara's senses. For a moment she listened, happy in the thought that Philip had come back, though only in her sleep, and to be remembered as a myth. At last it occurred to her that a door did really open and shut again, and a consciousness succeeded that somebody was in the room. Who could it be? The moon was rising higher and higher, filling the furthest part of the room, where the curtains were looped back, with a faint light. Things became more distinctly visible, as she lifted herself in bed and looked about her. She was no coward, she had never felt fear at anything unreal in her life. No thought of possible harm occurred to her.

"And yet how plainly it sounded—both the shutting of the door and the click of the lock, as if a key were turned," she said to herself. "I am almost sure of it. I'll get up and see."

She tried the nearest door, then the farthest one; both were securely locked. The key was on this side of the one by which she had entered—she could not remember distinctly with regard to the other, but she had a sort of uneasy recol-

lection that there had also been a key in that one, a bright brass key.

"It must have been my fancy," she murmured, seeking her pillow again. "Oh, the sweet perfume of the water-lilies! Oh, that beautiful face! It must be that Philip is in heaven, no earthly beauty could look like that. If I could only dream it all over again."

In the morning, the first thought that occurred to her was, that she had certainly heard some one in the room. In vain she threw off the impression. It might be that one of the family entered, not knowing any one was there; that was the most satisfactory way of accounting for it. For the first time she really dreaded to go down to breakfast, but she reasoned with herself that she had done nothing to really forfeit the good opinion of the family. They might hate her without reason, and that she could bear. She did not deem it probable, either, that her uncle had mentioned the matter even to his wife. Of course, if he had, she would feel outraged, and look upon her as an interloper and an enemy; but it was not her fault if her grandfather had seen fit to do a deed of justice before he died, and divide his property equally among

the brothers. As her uncle professed to be, and was, rich independantly of his ownership of Mortlake, there was really no harm done.

Then, as she was flitting about, she saw that she had left the key of her bag in its lock, and, finding the bag was locked, she slipped the key in her pocket and thought no more about it, only rating herself a little for being careless. At the summons of the breakfast bell she went down stairs. To her surprise, neither her aunt or uncle was there—only Belle, Kate, and little Emma. Belle poured the tea. Both of the older girls treated her with studied politeness.

"Mr. Worcester came here last night," said Kate, "while you were closeted with papa."

"Indeed," said Barbara, vexed that her cheek flushed at the unpleasant remembrance of last evening. It was quite evident that, as yet, they knew nothing of her business with her uncle.

"Yes, he has been in the habit of calling for some time ; he is quite an old friend of the family," Kate responded.

Barbara appreciated the allusion, that she was to understand, Mr. Worcester did not call at all upon her account, but it did not annoy her ; she had other matters to think of just then.

"Papa has gone to town, to fetch the doctor for mamma," said little Emma.

"Is my aunt sick?" said Barbara.

"Yes, she was taken in the night, suddenly, I believe," replied Kate.

"Just before bed-time," said Belle.

"Neuralgia of the heart; she is subject to it," Kate went on; "she is always frightened when it attacks her. I think she must have been excited or heard bad news. She never seems to have it without."

Barbara felt conscious and alarmed.

"Papa went after Dr. Packard, but he is only a country practitioner, and we haven't much faith in him."

Barbara ate her toast in silence, quite conscience-struck. That was about the time her uncle had probably spoken of the object of her visit, if he had spoken at all.

"Does she often have such illnesses?" she asked.

"Not very—it is generally a fright or a sudden shock. Do you remember, Belle, when that telegram came of her brother's death? She had it terribly then; we did not think she could live."

Barbara left the breakfast room thoroughly

miserable. What an ill-timed, wretched visit it had been! and she had come strong in the hope of her influence over her uncle, because he had made so much of her when she was a child. She had considered herself a born diplomatist, and this was the end: on her part, utter failure. More irritated and dissatisfied with herself than she chose to allow, she went out from the breakfast-room to the piazza, little Emma following her as usual. She would have been quite willing to go without the child, but the little one was not to be put off. Perhaps it was better so, for her mind was preying upon itself, and she needed some object to distract her thoughts, and turn the activity of her mind into some healthier channel.

"You haven't told me all about your folks, yet," said Emma, as they reached a pretty arbour covered with vines. Home, mother, dear Florence, and June, her heart was hungry for them. She needed no second bidding, but sat there describing the old house, and the familiar faces she was longing to see.

"I wish I had sisters like that. I don't think my sisters are nice at all; do you love them very much!"

"Very dearly, darling; we all love each other, and try to be good and kind to one another."

"Sometimes Belle says she loves me. But I think it's when I have on my embroidered dresses, with the white sashes; then she seems to be very fond of me," said the child, artlessly, "but I know she likes Dot a great deal the best."

"Who is Dot, dear?"

"Oh, he's the poodle; you haven't seen him, have you? That shows that Belle don't care much for you; she let's people she likes go into her room. Dot always stays up in her room now, because he's very old; he's got a blue ribbon on his neck, and a great long chain that sister leads him with—and it's solid silver. Belle hugs and kisses him a great deal more than she does me, and never speaks cross to him—but she does to me, most all the time."

"But he's a poor, helpless little dog," said Barbara, amused at the exaggerated pathos of the child's voice and manner.

"Well, it ain't anything *but* a dog, is it? Do you think a dog is as good as I am?"

"No, certainly not," said Barbara, laughing. "I think I should choose a bright, pleasant little girl, if I had the choice."

"And I don't like Kate, because she says you are a proud, hateful thing, and as poor as a church-mouse; and you came here for money, and without being invited—and—"

"That will do, Emma," said Barbara, flushed and white by turns, "don't talk about your sisters, dear, it's wrong."

"But she did, and says you think you're handsome, and put on airs—"

"Emma, you must not;" Barbara caught her breath, for the child's speech had wounded her deeply. At that moment steps were heard, and Kate emerged from the shrubbery, her face aflame, as she caught the child by the shoulder, shook her venomously, slapped both ears vigorously, and sent her into the house screaming.

"The little liar!" she exclaimed, between shut teeth; "and you are as bad, to listen."

Barbara had risen, holding out both hands appealingly, for she had never been so shocked in her life, as at this exhibition of brutality.

"Oh, how could you strike her so? you hurt her," she cried, almost tearfully.

"I'll strike her again, and hurt her worse, the wretched little tattler! There's no way to break that miserable child of lying."

"You might injure her for life," said Barbara, pitifully. She had never before seen a child struck in that reckless manner.

"I had better," continued the girl, passionately, "than she should grow up as she is growing—and you—" she seemed to choke, and commenced pulling off the flowers in a spiteful way—"we have heard such delightful news since breakfast," she continued, as she broke off vines and all. "So it seems you consider yourself the owner of Mortlake."

Barbara was silent for a while; she saw what a momentous charge it was, and how far it involved the happiness of the family. At the moment, it did not seem fair, just, or delicate, that she should have come at all, even with such just intentions, to oust them from such a place—but when she could speak, she said in a low voice:—

"I consider that it belongs to my father, cousin Kate."

"Cousin! don't cousin me, I'm sick of you," was the sharp rejoinder. "So you consider that it belongs to your father. And you have come here, you think, to send us all off, and bring your beggar's family to live in our home and on our land. I wish you may do it."

"I have no desire to talk about it," said Barbara.

"I shouldn't think you would have, after making us all sick of you with your pretensions. I wonder what you would have been, if father had not made a lady of you—and I guess he's sorry enough for it now—the idea of your impudence—"

"Your language is not very choice," said Barbara, keeping her temper, though not without a violent effort. "I am accustomed to talk with ladies. I wish you good morning."

She almost flew to her room.

"This very day!" she cried, with passionate vehemence, "I will go this very day. I will not stay another moment to be insulted by these creatures. Yes," she added, walking back and forth, "Mortlake *is* ours, and God is going to give it to us. I have faith enough to believe that; but the business shall be put into other hands, as perhaps it should have been before. My uncle is not man enough to act with common honesty. I'll pack up now and walk to the railway station; it's a straight road, and the morning is not hot. O, mamma! O, Floss! O, June! How I long to see you all! And how I

shall prize the blessing of a happy Christian home—thank God for it. I don't think I could be a Christian, if I had to stay here long, she added, with unsteady tones. Then she wondered why she had ever thought of coming, and talked to herself as people do when under the pressure of some strong feeling.

"I had better have listened to mamma. I have been too headstrong and sufficient for myself, and now I am punished. God has given me a lesson I shan't soon forget. I might have been spared all these humiliating scenes—but then I thought my uncle loved me. Well, I shall never think myself of so much consequence again—I see it all now—it is a lesson I cannot forget."

All this time she was busily gathering together the few toilet articles she had brought with her, and carefully replacing the pins she had used from the lace-trimmed crimson cushion under the mirror. Looking up suddenly, she saw her face, pale, worn, and almost haggard.

"I wonder if that is what money does?" she said, almost unconsciously. "That's just the way Uncle Harper looks."

She opened her travelling-bag, placed in it all

the little articles of minor importance, took out her gloves, her collar, and best necktie, and, just before closing it again, felt against the pocket in the secret case of the bag, to see if everything was safe. •

Suddenly she withdrew her hand with a look of utter consternation, and stood for a moment undecided, breathing rapidly, while her face changed to a shade that was unnatural and almost ghastly. Again she inspected the mouth of the bag, examined the lock, her heart beating like a trip-hammer, her fingers trembling, the colour coming and going in lips and cheeks. Then she emptied the bag upon the handsome coverlet, turned its contents over and over, shook them, smoothed them—searched her dresses—her pockets—searched every part of the room thereabouts, and then, as she sat there on the floor, a look of agony crossed her face. There was no box to be found, with its precious contents—the will was gone—Mortlake lost.





CHAPTER XVIII

A LETTER FROM HOME.

"Leaves have their time to fall,
And flowers to wither at the north wind's breath,
And stars to set—but all,
Thou hast all seasons for thine own, O Death!"

BARBARA opened her eyes languidly. The room was darkened,—a delicate-looking, sweet-faced woman sat beside her pillow. For a moment she could not gather her faculties sufficiently to speak.

"Where am I?" she asked at length, and the few words seemed an effort.

"At your uncle's house, miss. I suppose so, at least, for the little girl calls you Cousin Barbara. They've all been very much alarmed about you."

"Alarmed! why, what has been the matter with me? My head feels strangely—that is all."

"I don't know, my dear. You were taken in

a sort of fit. Then when you came to yourself you raved about losing something, and declared that it was stolen, whatever it was; after that a fainting fit came on, and you were unconscious for hours. They sent for the doctor, and, as they could find no nurse, I came over here to stay with you a day or two."

"Oh, when did all this happen?" asked Barbara, putting her hand to her head in a confused way.

"Only two days ago, my dear," was the answer. "The doctor thought your stupor seemed like insensibility caused by narcotics. You did not take anything of that kind, did you? opium, for instance."

"I never took opium in my life. I never needed it."

"Well, my dear, you are better now, and—"

"Oh, I wish I could forget again. It is very terrible," and Barbara looked up with streaming eyes.

"What is so terrible, my child?"

"Everything—everything connected with this dreadful place. It has been a torture, a slow, terrible torture from the first. I remember it now; oh, my poor, poor father! he trusted me

so; they have stolen it. I have been robbed in my own uncle's house! my father was robbed first and now I have been. Oh, no wonder they were frightened, though I think they had rather I had died—for it was stolen here."

"What was stolen here?" asked the watcher.

"The will—giving Mortlake to my father. I brought it with me; it must be searched for, they *must* answer for it! Oh! I wonder if I can get up?" her eyes glittered, her cheeks burned with fever.

"My dear child, you must not get up, you must lie quiet. There, you see," as Barbara lifted herself, and fell down again from sheer weakness. "I don't know what you mean about the will, but they told me, Belle and Kate, that you had lost your reason; that you were subject to these spells, and that sometimes you were dangerous."

"Oh, those wicked girls!" panted Barbara, as she lay helplessly back, the tears welling from under her closed eyelids. "How cruel they have been to me,—my uncle and all; how very, very cruel! First they rob me, and then they say such dreadful things! My poor father! all is gone,—everything is gone!" she sobbed.

"Don't cry so, my dear," said the lady, gently, "you won't get well if you do."

"If only I never might," sobbed Barbara, passionately. "Oh, I know it is wrong to talk so," she added, seeing the sympathy and sorrow in the dark eyes that looked into her own, "but I am so miserable, and I have been so deceived."

"She has seen some dreadful trouble," said the watcher to herself, "or two days would never have written such lines of suffering on so young a face. I wonder what she means? It is certain that the whole family act very strangely about and toward her."

"Will you tell me who you are?" asked Barbara, as she opened her eyes again.

"I am Mrs. Worcester," was the answer.

"And is Mr. Worcester, who plays so sweetly—"

"He is my son, dear," replied the other, glad to see a change in Barbara's manner.

"How very kind of you to come here! You will never know how kind it seems to me. If it had been Kate or Belle, I think it would have driven me mad. May I tell you all about it?"

"Certainly, if it is right I should know."

"It must be right, for I have no one else to

go to," and Barbara told her all the story, giving glimpses unconsciously of the mother, of June and Florence, and the old, happy home. Every word she said carried conviction with it to the heart of the listener.

"You are sure you had not taken it out, sure you had not dropped it or carried it with you?"

"Perfectly sure," Barbara answered. "I had not once disturbed it, even by opening the box. You see it was made to seem more as if I had lost it, my box and all being gone. Only one night I left my key in the lock. That was the night after I came here, and I have told you how I was wakened by a rustling noise, and some one opening and shutting a door softly. It was taken then, I am just as sure as if I had seen it. Mrs. Bennett's rooms are next to this—"

"My dear, this is terrible!" said Mrs. Worcester, as Barbara's eyes told what the tongue refused to speak. "I really cannot bear to think of it. You certainly saw nobody."

"I saw nobody, but I am sure there was someone in my room. Besides, I remember distinctly there was a brass key in the further lock as well as in this one; there was a light somewhere beyond the house, that struck it and made it shine

like a jewel; but in the morning the key was not there. Yes, my box is stolen. There is no use in looking, no use in accusing any one. The paper is destroyed, and all poor papa's prospects are dashed to the ground. We have lost Mortlake, and I must go back to those happy hearts, to tell them that my carelessness, my foolish determination, has ruined them. God forgive me!"

"My poor child, this is a sad story. I am sorry I have heard it, but more sorry for you. Don't cry to bitterly, but put your trust in God, who has allowed it for some wise purpose."

"I did put my trust in God, oh! I am sure I did, and see what disappointment and crime have followed! What can I say? what can I do? So poor—so poor and helpless as we are—" the tears choked her utterance.

"You can get well, and go home and comfort them all; help will come, only believe in and trust God. It may be even now on its way."

"Do you think so?"

"I do, and counsel you to think so."

"But we have lost Mortlake forever."

"My dear, Mortlake is not the best thing your Heavenly Father can give you. There are possessions of far more value, of more importance,

too, in His eyes than even this fine place. You would not weigh Mortlake for an instant against the life of one of your little sisters at home?"

"Oh! no, no; not for a minute!"

"And so they feel, or would if they knew you were ill or in danger. Believe me, they will be glad enough to get you again, even if Mortlake is lost. And the place might have been a snare to your soul, my dear girl."

"It don't seem so," sighed Barbara.

"Believe it, for it must be true. God would not have allowed you to lose Mortlake, if it were not for some ultimate good and gain to you."

Barbara was silent for a time, evidently reflecting upon what had been said.

"Is Mrs. Bennett still so very sick?" she asked.

"Still sick? I did not know she had been sick at all."

"Yes, the day—I—found my box gone—that morning they told me she had been taken the night before with some disease of the heart, to which she was subject. They might have been told so—but I don't believe she was sick at all;" and Barbara's beautiful eyes were filled with a strange intelligence as she looked in the face of her companion.

"I cannot tell," answered Mrs. Worcester, trying to avoid the glance and the suspicion it conveyed, "it may be so."

Barbara was silent again for a few moments, apparently studying the outlines of the faded, but sweet face at her side.

"So they said I accused them of stealing?" she murmured, in a slow, even voice. "I wonder what I did? what I said? I have not the slightest recollection. I feel as if I had been asleep a month. Do they—the girls—ever come up here?"

"Yes, they have been as far as the door and looked at you."

"And"—she shuddered—"my uncle?"

"No, he has been in the city almost ever since. Your aunt came in once, and brought the little one, who had been crying to see you."

"Dear little Emma!" Barbara's lips quivered. "But the mother—she has robbed me."

"Oh, my child! don't say that. Think what a terrible accusation it is."

"I know it—but it's true; I feel it, I shall always feel it. I had better not say it, though. I wouldn't, only to you. How very kind of you to come here."

"Oh, no; they are aware that my services are always available; it is what I have done all my life."

"And your son is just as kind," said Barbara.

"He is a dear, good son, murmured the smiling mother.

"I must go home soon," said Barbara, "just as soon as this weakness passes off. And if I could get counsel—what use would it be? Papa would never consent, for the honour of the family. And what proof can I give that I brought the will here? No, I don't see that there is any hope for me."

A rap sounded at the door. Barbara turned her face to the wall. Mrs. Worcester opened the door.

"Here's a letter,"—it was the servant's voice—"and is the miss better, madam?"

"Much better, thank you."

"For me?" said Barbara, eagerly.

"Miss Barbara Bennett, Mortlake," read Mrs Worcester.

Barbara opened the letter eagerly, her face flushed, her eyes glittering. It was from Florence, and read as follows:—

"DEAREST, BEST OF BARBARAS,—You will be

glad to know that your beautiful letter made us all supremely happy. Lovely Mortlake indeed—our Mortlake—and papa was so delighted—and mamma cried.”

Barbara fell back with a groan.

“I can’t read it,” she cried, chokingly, “my head swims.”

“Shall I?” asked Mrs. Worcester, compassionately.

“Please do,” and the letter was continued.

“‘You will be glad to know that papa is progressing beyond our wildest hopes. Doctor Lothrop was here yesterday, and said—you know he is our dear old city doctor, and comes just as often as he can—that it is like a miracle, almost, to see him sitting up again, and in possession of his faculties. It is the air and water of this place, he thinks—this miserable place, as we call it—and he predicts his complete recovery. Only think of it! papa well and Mortlake ours! Was there ever before such a conjunction to look forward to? health and wealth—happiness we can’t help having together, can we, darling; I beg you won’t hurry home; stay and enjoy yourself while you can—”

Two scalding tears ran down Barbara's cheeks.

“But I suppose I ought to tell you that June has been complaining since yesterday, and could scarcely get up this morning. A few moments ago she came down stairs, but found herself quite too weak to go about. She lies now on the old calico lounge that you call the kitchen comfort, and her cheeks and eyes are very bright. I am afraid she has been writing too much, and it is all we can do to keep her pen away from her. We all hope it is nothing but a cold; June was always a little delicate, you know. O Barbara, dear, she has just finished the most beautiful poem! I am sure nothing could be sweeter. When I read it, it made me feel as if I were going to lose her. There, that is nonsense, and just please consider it unsaid. You must laugh at my little superstitions, as you always did, you darling, dear old Bab!

“If you knew how we miss you! The old place seems all forlorn without your gracious presence. I almost want to say, do come home, for you are queen-bee here, and our eyes ask for the sight of you.

“Oh, by the way, the *tableaux* came off, and it *rained*. There was a general disappointment;

and I *didn't* be Topsy, as the children say. It was a dreadful failure, but I don't want to be glad, and I won't, for it isn't Christian.' ”

“A very sweet, pure little letter, and I thank you for the privilege of reading it,” said Mrs. Worcester, as she finished—“but, my dear, my dear!”

“Oh, Mrs. Worcester, June is sick! my own dear little June. Don't ask me to lie down again, I must be stronger; I must get up, I must go home!”

“You see,” murmured the kind woman, smoothing her hot brow, as Barbara fell back again, exhausted.

“Oh, it would be sorrow, indeed, to lose our little June,” moaned Barbara, helplessly.

“It may be only a cold, my dear, as your sister says. Tell me about her? How old is she? Old enough to write poetry, it seems.”

“Oh, Mrs. Worcester, she's a little frail creature, so very tiny, though almost sixteen, and she has a beautiful genius—she has already written for one of the best papers, and received pay for it, too. She don't seem like one of us, we are both robust; oh, if she should die, and I not be there!” She looked up piteously.

“My dear, can you not trust her in the hands of God?”

“I ought to, yes; but I am so weak, and I seem to feel as if June were going to be taken from us. Oh, Mrs. Worcester, you smile because I say such things. You look as if you had never known trouble.”





CHAPTER XIX.

MRS. WORCESTER'S STORY.

"Who then can strive with strong necessity?"

"MY dear, trouble and I have been intimate friends," said Mrs. Worcester; "shall I read you a leaf out of my early history? Perhaps, while you are so weak, it will interest you, and give you something else to think of than to conjure up trials that may never come."

"If you will—how glad I shall be—I am very morbid;" her lips trembled.

"Then I will tell you how I fared when I went for a governess. The theme is quite an old one, almost worn out, I suppose you will think, but misfortunes must come, and girls must go out governessing, I suppose, to the end of time.

"I was only eighteen when my father died. Up to that time I had lived an utterly selfish and luxurious life. Every wish that indulgence

could bestow was mine. You may imagine, then, how hard it was to learn, in the midst of my agonising sorrow, that my kind father had died a bankrupt—that I was as poor as the poorest—nay, more destitute than our own servants, who all had homes to go to. Everything was to be sold under the hammer. I had one uncle who wished me to accept a home with him, but there was a skeleton in his house, of which I need not say more than I could not endure to see his degradation and unhappiness, for he was a good, noble-hearted man.

“At first I was nearly crazed with grief. I would listen to no consolation. I accused God of injustice—I contemplated—I dare not tell you what. When the one servant who had stayed by me came up and told me there was a poor woman down stairs who wished to see me, I declared I could see no one.

“‘Oh, honey, you’ll surely see me, mistis dear’—I heard the voice—another moment I was in the arms of my old nurse, Marget. Blessings on her blue turban, and her shovel-bonnet. I love the whole race, for dear old Marget’s sake.

“For she was black, dear, but to me her face looked sweet and fair. How at rest I felt in

those kind arms. How the trouble and the anguish seemed to fly from me, leaving my brain cool and quiet once more."

"I am glad for you—even now," said Barbara, smiling through her tears.

"I have never forgotten that moment," Mrs. Worcester went on—"nor the voice in which she said:

"‘I heered of it, yistedy, and says I to my Sam, ‘Sam, I’s gwine for dat ar chile.’ Sam says he, ‘yis mammy,’ Sam always says yis mammy, ‘cause he’s been taught up to, so I be’s here after a ride o’ twenty miles. I knowed you wanted me, honey.’

"‘How good of you to come,’ I said—for I assure you, next to my dear father, I loved that old black woman—‘I’m so glad, for, nurse, I’m homeless and friendless.’

"‘Hear her,’ said the dear old creature, ducking her old scoop-bonnet, ‘jest hear dat ar chile. Says she’s friendly and homely. Now jes’ you go and pick up your traps. Sam’s buyed me a house, an’ it’s a real house outen bricks, wid a yard tacked on to it, an’ I has two rooms empty and garnished, an’ one of ‘em is carpeted, and I weaved dat ar carpet, wid my own fingers; an’

dars a big bed-stead with a can'py up top, and reel downy pillers.

“‘Dar’s where you is gwine till you ken do better. You see, colored folkses often lets rooms to white peoples, an’ it’s all right. You knows my muffins, eh? An’ my tea, an’ coffee? An my pones, hah? jes’ de sweetest and de lightest I ’members how you used to love ’em, honey, an I’m a member of the ’Hitable s’ciety, and dats de reason why I wears dese yer white glubs. Now when ken ye come, honey?’”

In spite of her heavy heart, Barbara laughed outright at this specimen of mingled pathos and humour.

“‘I’ll go right back with you,’” said I—Mrs. Worcester resumed; “‘and glad enough of the privilege.’ So I went out to see to my trunks with a lighter heart than I had worn since the death of my dear father.

“That very night, at ten o’clock, Sam helped me from the cars. Sam, whom I remembered as perpetually standing on his head, stealing sugar, and whistling ‘Go down to Egypt Land,’ had grown a stout six-footer, and very proud was Marget of her son.

“‘I telled ye he’d grow outen all his bad

habits,' she whispered to me as she gazed admiringly at her gigantic son. 'De Lord be praised, he's got fer to speak in meetin', an' he don't even smoke, he's that pious.'

"For a few weeks I rested body and soul. Marget understood me and humoured all my little whims. When I had grown stronger and more sure of myself, I set out in quest of a place.

"I had previously advertised that I wished a position as a governess, and had received some five or six letters wishing me to apply to certain places.

"The first on my list proved to be a very elegant brown-stone residence. 'Here,' said I, as I went up the marble steps into a magnificent hall, 'I shall find intelligence and refinement.' My dear, we cannot judge by brick and plaster or even by fine paintings and bronzes and gilding. I was ushered into a splendid parlour, and in a few moments in fluttered a little woman, gorgeously arrayed and absolutely glittering with diamonds on her fingers and at her throat.

"'You wish to go as governess?'" she said, with a familiar manner, as she seated herself.

"'I do, madame,' was my reply, 'have you children?'

“‘I! no, miss,’ she said, ‘I wish a governess for myself. I’ve lately come into a fortune, and haven’t no education to speak of. I promise you I’ll try to learn, if the beaus will only keep away, and you and I will have a jolly time together, for I like your looks. I shouldn’t like to learn no rules of grammer or sich, but I should like to talk correct in ordinary and to say a few little things in French, you know, easy like, and play a few tunes on the peanner. I’m monstrous fond of music, so I hope you can play. I’ve got a fine instrerment, you see—brand new—ordered from the factory only a week ago. And there’s lots o’ things one would like to git hold of, to be wise and genteel. ’Tisn’t books I need, so much as a lady to talk with and learn how to do things.’

“You may well imagine this did not suit me. ‘Thank you,’ I said coldly, ‘but I wish to teach children. I don’t think I could suit you, at all, and, if you please, I’ll go.’

“‘Well, you are a fool,’ she said, coarsely, ‘like all the rest of ’em. I should think any poor girl would jump at such a chance, plenty of company and very little to do—plenty of good living, for I have the best of cooks. I don’t see

why you can't come,' she added with a whine, 'I like your face so much.'

"'I am sorry, but I must decline,' I said firmly, and as I left the house the poor girl used some very coarse expressions. I think I should have been glad to undertake the task if there had been any of the lady in her, but there was none.

"My next trial was with a widow. She had four children under twelve years of age. There seemed a probability that we should suit each other, till the woman said :

"'I don't like to exclude my governess from the parlour and from certain privileges, but as I have two grown sons and you are rather pretty, and people *will* talk, you know, I shall have to ask you to keep in that part of the house devoted to the younger children, and I am sure we shall get along very comfortably together.'

"'Thank you, madam, but I decline to come,' was my answer; and I dare not tell how my anger surged up. The idea that she should caution me to avoid her sons in that cold-blooded way, fairly made me shake with resentment. I would listen to nothing as she followed me through the hall with her apologies. My

cheeks and my brain felt on fire, and her last words nearly drove me wild :

“‘You are too proud to get any position. I fancy you had better try to live without work.’

“I went home in such a state that Marget was frightened, and, armed with herb-tea and other medicines, posted herself at my bedside, her black face actually pale with apprehension.

“Three other places were tried. In one there were nine children, and I was to wash and dress five of them, in fact, act the part of nurse as well as governess. In the other I heard such language, and saw such manners, that I was thoroughly disgusted.

“At the third house I was asked if I knew anything about fevers, and learned that I was expected to come while two of the inmates were down with scarlet fever.

“‘I will try once more,’ I said, at the end of the week, ‘and but once. If that fails, I’ll march into the first kitchen that needs a second-rate Biddy, and there find rest. There at least, putting aside my gentility, I can afford to be snubbed.’”

“Oh, would you ?” queried Barbara.

“Indeed I would, my dear, rather than be idle

or dependent. My last effort was made on Monday morning. I had been refreshed on Saturday and Sunday, by the little prayer-meetings held in Marget's parlour, in which the white lady was sweetly and Christianly remembered—the only drawback to the seriousness of which was the too vivid recollection of Sam, with his heels in the air. Whether Sam read, prayed, or exhorted, he seemed to me to be performing the order of exercises on his head. If I shut my eyes I expected to see him reversed as soon as I opened them, and when in one of his prayers he said, "Lord, we's forebber turning somersets at Thee," it brought old times back so vividly that I found it difficult to refrain from laughter. With all these ridiculous drawbacks, there was so much of good that I felt myself strengthened for any new trial I might be called to meet.

"Monday morning came.

"'I's prayed de Lord berry hard for you, honey,' said Marget, as I made my appearance ready to go out, 'and by a certain sign I think He's goin' for to answer it.'

"'Thank you, nursey,' I responded. 'I hope for your sake and my own He will; but what is the certain sign?'

"'No use to 'plain to you, Miss Vieve, for you moughtn't understan'—but I tell you, you's gwine fer to hav good luck dis yer day, now you mark my word. Dars a creepin' ob de bones an a shiverin' ob de mind, dat on'y takes place on-natural times, and when it *does*, honey, jes' you look out, for de Lord o' Jerusalem's a comin' down sure! Jes' you take you old maummie's words for comfort, and let em' tickle your heart, for dars a bright day ahead, an' you'll tell me so when you comes here dis yer night.'

"'I hope so, indeed I do,' was my earnest answer.

"'Jest you keep on hopin'—dar ain't nuthin' like hope. It's an anchor to de soul sure'n stid-fast, an' you keep hold on it. See ef your old maummie don't tell de truth.'

"Dear old soul! She did tell the truth; for it was a day of wonders—a day of sunshine and beauty to me—a day to mark with a whiter stone, never to be forgotten. I started out, warmed with the comforting words of my nurse. My walk was a long one; my journey's end a plain handsome dwelling-house set in the midst of a lovely garden, that showed the good taste and culture of its inmates. How I trembled as

I went up the steps. 'Oh, my heart,' I said, 'if this might only prove to be home!'

"A maid came to the door, leading one of the loveliest children I ever saw. She ushered me at once into a room whose light, warmth, and colour gave such a sense of welcome that I could not help exclaiming, 'This is somebody's home!'

"Presently the door opened and a lady entered. Her face was charmingly young and fresh, but her hair was as white as silver. She paused as she came opposite me, and stood for a few seconds regarding me intently.

"'You remind me of a very dear friend,' she said. 'Excuse me, but are you the young lady who advertised for a place as a governess?'

"I replied that I was.

"'And your name?'

"'Genevieve Falconer.'

"'And your mother's maiden name?'

"'Genevieve Vinesy.'

"'My dear child,' and her lips trembled, 'your mother was the dearest, sweetest friend of my life. I know she must have died when you were a very little child, or you would have heard her speak of me.'

"‘Yes, my mother died when I was only five years old,’ I said, wondering at her emotion.

"‘The blessed angel! You will never know what she was to me!’ was her exclamation. ‘And you, my child, shall be doubly welcome to my heart and home. My little orphan niece requires just such guiding hands as I know yours must be, daughter of such a mother. I shall not look upon you merely as a governess, because I pay you wages, but you shall be as my own child, if you can bear with an old woman whose portion from earliest infancy has been grief and sorrow.’

"I could scarcely speak my thanks.

"Instantly I felt that I had here found a guiding, controlling, loving presence, in which I should feel my longing for a mother’s love fully gratified—a house that would be the nearest approach to Paradise that I had ever dared hope for.

"And it proved to me a sure refuge, my dear," continued Mrs. Worcester with a bright smile. "Marget’s Sam died in hospital during the war, and the good creature herself lived with me till she went to the better home. Since then I have lost husband and children—five sweet sons

have I laid out of sight—only one, God has left me, to be the stay of my age. Do you think I have seen no trouble?"

"But how can you look so fresh and happy?" asked Barbara, wonderingly.

"Because, my dear, I trust everything in the hands of my Father, and believe with all my soul that though a man die yet shall he live again."





CHAPTER XX.

HOME AGAIN.

"Her white clasped hands
Listlessly hanging on her knee, as though
No pulse beat in them."

IN the following morning, bright and early, Mrs. Worcester came to Mortlake, and found Barbara up, though still very weak.

"Quite determined, I suppose," she said with her pleasant smile.

"To go home? oh, yes; I am strong and well enough to-day. I couldn't rest if I were sick even. I'm so nervous and worried about June! I suppose my aunt will let the carriage go as far as the dépôt."

"If she cannot, I can send mine, my dear."

"Certainly she shall have the carriage," said Belle, when Mrs. Worcester spoke to her. The girl was in a fever to have her cousin gone. It was in her eyes an unlucky omen, that Mrs.

Worcester had met Barbara at all. Mrs. Bennett had gone to the city that morning, leaving Emma behind, who was clamorous to see Barbara. The dear child sat on her little hassock, so still and patient, that it sent the tears to Barbara's eyes whenever she looked at her.

"Are you going home to-day?" she asked.

"Yes, darling."

The child drew a deep sigh.

"I don't like it," she said.

"Don't like what, dear?"

"I don't like it, because you been sick and unhappy."

"I am well, now," responded Barbara.

"And happy?"

"No, dear, I wish I was;" and Barbara's quivering lip gave force to the admission.

"I'd be happy if I could stay with you," said the child, looking at her wistfully. "I don't think Belle and Kate want me here; mamma kisses me and loves me—but maybe she wouldn't care."

"Wouldn't care if what, dear?"

"If I went away."

"Were you thinking of going home with me?" asked Barbara, with an amused half-smile.

"Oh, no, none of them would let me; but I'd like to go away, somewhere. Nurse says if you ask Heavenly Father, He'll let you do just what you want. So I asked Heavenly Father to let me go away, somewhere."

There was something in the little one's voice that awed Barbara as she listened.

"But where do you want to go most, my darling?" she asked, stooping towards her.

"Where it's happy," replied the child, "and I can have lots of little girls to play with. Nurse says heaven is all full of little angel-children. I think that's where I'd like to go, best of all."

Barbara rose with a chill at her heart.

"You are your mother's idol," she said, almost bitterly. "God help her, if you should be called."

The leave-taking was very cold and constrained. The cousins stood upon the porch, and, as Barbara left it, a sudden purple cloud, obscuring the sun, threw the whole place in shadow; and so she always remembered it after.

Little Emma wept bitterly—the child and the nurse rode with Barbara to the depôt. Barbara held the child to her heart, and rained kisses upon her sweet little face, as she bade her farewell.

"You'll never come again," said the child.

"But I shall see you again, darling, I trust."

"No—no," said the child sobbingly, and so they parted. Mrs. Worcester came down before the train started.

"Give my love to the dear ones at home," she said; "I feel as if I knew them all."

"I wish we might see you there," said Barbara, smiling through her tears.

"Who knows but you may?" was the gentle response. "Don't think me officious, my dear, if I say, learn to trust yourself in the hands of One who knows the end from the beginning, and who, if He had seen it was best, would have given you Mortlake."

Seated in the cars, Barbara's strength nearly failed her, but she summoned all her energies to resist the terrible lassitude that seemed to have paralysed her faculties. All that night she sat looking out into the black darkness, never once losing consciousness in sleep, her lovely eyes so mournful, yet so luminous, in their strained watching, that the conductor on his rounds wondered at the pretty young miss who would not sleep.

"I declare, it makes me feel uncomfortable,"

he said to a chum, "to go past that young girl. Curious, she ain't shut her eyes or nodded once to-night. I'd just give a dollar to see her wink. It's my opinion she never does."

More than the conductor watched that sad, intense face. A woman who fell into cat-naps was so annoyed by Barbara's persistent wakefulness that she turned her back upon her. A young man in the farthest corner, with his hat pulled low upon his forehead, seemed as sleepless as she, and hardly moved his eyes from her face. It was well she did not notice it.

In the early morning, long before the sun arose, Barbara took the stage. She was nervously alive now to every little experience. She watched the mile-posts, the farmers' dwellings, the grey leaden sky, the dark blotches of tree and shrub, the larger blotches of far hill or near church, till the sun came up in all its beauty. At last—there was the old familiar corner. The horn sounded—Florence met her at the gate.

"Is she better?" cried Barbara.

Florence shook her head with a sob.

9



CHAPTER XXI.

MEETING THE LOVED ONES.

"Oh! how pale she is!
How changed!"

NOW very cool and quiet it was within doors. Nothing was changed. The six tall windows let in the broad sunlight, that lay in great, broad swathes along the floor. All things were in the old, accustomed places. What did Barbara expect, that she looked about her with such a weary, hopeless, disappointed expression? These things were never to be exchanged for the beauty and comfort of Mortlake. The dream and the struggle were passed, and there were no uncertainties to be thought of. They were just as poor as they had ever been, and Barbara must bend her energies to release her father from his hard servitude. There was no help for it now,—she must go at the call of

duty. Even her mother could no longer object, she thought. It smote upon her heart that June did not run to meet her. Florence had said: "Mother is with her, and cannot leave her just yet, even to see you."

Florence had just kindled a fire upon the broad, black stones, of fine chips; and the cinders burst, and the sparks spluttered, and flew all over the hearth as was their wont,—as if they were either merry or mad. The little table was drawn out and the cloth laid, but there were no dishes put on yet. A map which Floss had drawn, to surprise the home-coming sister, hung over the fire-place, in its little home-made frame of acorns and pine burs. The old sofa, with its broad back and great square pillow, and the ancient piano, with its pitifully slender legs, seemed to welcome Barbara home. So did the windows, and the high-backed oak chairs, and the one tall straw rocker, that had been made by a carpenter in the town.

Florence helped Barbara off with her hat. She could not well see her face till she had drawn up the veil, then she exclaimed—

"Why, Bab! have you been sick?"

"Travelling all night, dear, you know," said

Barbara, faintly. Floss kissed her, and led her to the sofa.

"Sit down, Bab, dear, you do look as if you had been severely ill. How very tired you must be, to look so fagged and pale!"

"I don't know," said Barbara wearily, "I don't think I feel very tired—but I suppose I ought to be. I couldn't sleep in the cars, you see—and they stopped at every station—and I haven't been well, Florence. I was a little sick when I got your letter; then hearing June was ill—O Floss, we haven't been careful enough with her—she has been sick so much. Tell me all about her, Floss—don't spare me. Can't I see her?"

"Not now, dear. She is sleeping, for the first time since day before yesterday, and mother don't dare to stir—the sleep may do her so much good; the slightest noise disturbs her; if one but moves a finger it seems to me she awakes."

"Poor mamma; isn't she tired out? I'll take her place," murmured Barbara.

"But you look as if you needed oceans of sleep yourself, dear. Mamma knows you are here, I telegraphed; you must see our signal apparatus; how you will laugh. As soon as June wakes she will come out. Only last night

she said it seemed as if you had been gone a month—and how thankful she was that there was no danger of being parted from you. I believe you are the apple of her eye, Bab, dear.”

Barbara, with a sudden movement, buried her face in the pillow.

“I’m not going to talk with you now about anything; only to think what self-denial that will be! Oh, you may be sure I shall be quite silent till you have had your tea, and a good, long rest.”

Barbara needed the rest, and dreaded the questions that were sure to come. Her heart was full. A sense of the injustice done her by those of her own blood rankled in her bosom, stinging as if it were a coal of fire. She lay there on the sofa, fascinated by the shine of the flames, as they leaped from the logs, now white, now yellow, now a ruddy, intense crimson, watching Floss’ quiet movements to and fro, as she brought the dishes, or flitted between the fire and the table; watched June’s pet kitten as she laboriously chased her own long, white tail, longing to take the little creature up, but feeling too weary to move; and at last her eyes closed, the sweet peace of slumber stole over her pale face, and

when Floss was ready to pour out the tea, the tired Barbara was fast asleep.

"Poor girl!" whispered Floss, as she stood watching her sister, "how grieved and unhappy she looks! I wonder if they were kind to her? the purse-proud creatures! She don't really look as if she had had a happy moment; and some way I don't like even to speak about Mortlake. What a dear, beautiful face she has! I'll carry the toast up to papa, and make some fresh when she wakes up. Now if only dear June will get well, we shall be such a happy family once more!"

Not till the clock struck twelve did Barbara awake from a deep, refreshing sleep. She started, rubbed her eyes like a little child, and counted all the strokes.

"Twelve o'clock!" she sprang up. "So late, and I haven't seen mother or June."

There was no fire, nobody in sight. But the table stood covered with dishes, just as it had when she fell asleep. Softly rising, she went over to the hearth and poured out a little cold tea. Then she opened the door, and moved softly into the hall. The fresh air blew in the scents of flowers. Up the broad stair-case she

crept wearily. June's geranium stood on the sill of the hall-window, drooping for want of care. Outside, the branches of a great elm brushed the window-panes; there seemed to be soft, solemn music made by the winds, as on Æolian harp-strings. Barbara felt strange as she walked slowly to June's door. All at once she caught sight of her mother's sweet, worn face. She was seated near June's pillow.

Mrs. Bennett looked up with a pleasant smile of welcome, and held out her hand; but the motion seemed to Barbara a sorrowful, almost a hopeless one.

"Shall I come in?"

"Yes dear, she seems asleep, though very restless. Sometimes she opens her eyes, and looks at me, but I don't think she knows me."

Barbara went in close up to the bed-side. Then she stooped down and kissed her mother.

"Do you think she is better?"

"I'm afraid not. I hoped the rest would do great things for her, but I don't see any difference.

"Shall we pick the currants now?"

It was the changed voice of little June.

"Say, Bab, dear, shall we pick the currants

now? You know they are all spoken for. Oh, what lovely clusters!" and she moved her hands uneasily. Then she sang:

"Currants in the garden bed,
Where do you get your blushes red."

"One can make such sweet poetry about fruit," she babbled on, "fruit and flowers, the earth's jewels. I could write all day about fruit and flowers,—oh, yes, and the wind and the skies.

"Blue: such a clear, wide blue! O Bab dear, God *must* love His world, it is so beautiful! When we get to Mortlake—I suppose there are oceans of roses there!"

Barbara burst into tears, fell down by her mother's side, and hid her wet face in her lap.

"Oceans of roses," continued the brain-sick girl.

"Flowers are God's angels,
No stains are on the flowers,
They grow in black, black earth, too,
But the leaves take no soil;
His thought gives them colour,
His touch gives them form,
His breath gives them life."

She was silent for a moment, then she turned her head and her bright unconscious eyes, as she called:

"Barbara! come here; I want you."

"I am here, darling," said Barbara, repressing her sobs.

O Bab, dear," was the tired little plaint, "*please* do come here."

"Mother, what shall I do? she don't see me, don't hear me," cried Barbara.

"Go out, my dear. I think, though she is not conscious, there must be something in your presence that excites her."

Barbara, all in tears, went slowly and unwillingly from the room.

Florence sat by the window in the dining or living room, shelling the peas which she had just picked from the vines.

"Doesn't it seem strange one has to work on and get dinner just the same?" she said, piteously; "but that must always be, I suppose. Did she know you, dear?"

"O Floss! what shall I do?" exclaimed Barbara, seating herself on the lounge, a hopeless look in her eyes. "O Floss! dear, I have been so ungrateful! I thought if by any possibility we lost Mortlake, it would be the very worst thing that could happen. But oh! to lose little June! Floss, what does the doctor say? I'm

sure death never seemed so near before, even in our worst days. Oh, welcome poverty! I'd work my fingers to the bone, to keep little June here."

"Yes, Bab, dear, we all feel like that," said Florence, tremblingly, brushing the tears away, "but I hope we may keep her, and I am glad about Mortlake, for her sake. Why Bab, Bab dear, what have I said? are you going to faint? You look like death. Let me get something! O Barbara!"

"No, don't," and Barbara, with a sharp cry of agony, hid her face on the shoulder of her sister.

Moments passed; they seemed hours to wondering Florence.

Presently Barbara lifted her wet eyes.

"O Floss, I've got such a dreadful story to tell you, such a dreadful disappointment in store for you all—I almost wish I could die."

"Hush, Bab," said Floss, with outward composure, but quaking inwardly. "You shan't tell it sitting here, whatever you do. You frighten me terribly." She put down the pan of peas, and made Barbara lie down. Then she patted her cheeks, kissed her lips, all the time

trying to put from her the horrible doubts that assailed her of a sudden.

"Now tell me all about it," she said, when her sister was comparatively calm.

Barbara half-hid her face, and told it all. Florence listened, now shelling the peas with quick, nervous motions, now dallying with them, and softly shaking the pan as if she had almost forgotten her task, until the very end.

"Bab, it's awful!" she said. "I don't think I ever heard anything so fearful in my life;" and that was all the comment she made for some moments. Barbara groaned and sighed and sobbed. Florence got down by the couch, and wound her arms about her.

"Darling Bab, don't feel so sad about it, though it is dreadful. You were a perfect heroine. You did your best—no one could have done better than the best. And if they are wicked enough to commit a crime for the sake of keeping the property, why, leave it to them to enjoy, if they can. Don't you believe God will make it up to us some other way? I do. Let's have faith and be brave, Bab, that will take off half the sting. Even if we should have to go right on here as we have done, why, you

know, Bab, we love each other dearly—we can work for each other, can't we, dear? Besides, it all sinks into insignificance before June's trouble. Nobody wants to think of property now.

"Have you never heard people say June looked like one—like one not likely to—to be spared?" murmured Barbara.

"Why, dear, I said it myself," replied Florence. "But that's no reason we should give her up, is it? I'm going to believe she will get well—now there's nothing else to take up my thoughts," she added, half-sadly.

"I suppose you haven't told mother?" she added, a moment after.

"No; O Floss! it frightens me to think of it. How shall I tell her?"

"Just as you have told me, of course. I don't think mamma's heart is much set upon this world, anyway; and now is the very best time."

"O, Floss! I can't, I can't; it kills me to see her so resigned and gentle under all her troubles."

"But you know what a Christian mamma is—that's the reason. And besides, the thing is done, and we can't help it. Let us try to find a bright side to look upon. But I must build a fire. See, it's most one; we have become shock-

ingly irregular ; poor papa will think we have forgotten him. Don't move, Barbara," as Barbara attempted to lift her heavy head, "I shall not allow you to do a single thing. You are just to lie there and rest."

Florence poured the peas into a shallow dish, and stealthily wiped away a few tears, that Barbara should not see. Poor girl, she wiped out a good many pleasant pictures with those tears—a great many bright and cheerful hopes, and all of beautiful Mortlake.

"You must let me help you, dear," said Barbara. "I can't lie here idle, I feel so much better to be on my feet. You know I had a good long sleep. How did you get on with the work alone?"

"Rather well, I think, than otherwise," half-laughed Florence. "One day I burnt the bread, and cried half an hour after wringing one of Redbird's chickens, to make some nourishing drink for June. The dear soul, she never would have touched it if she had known. I didn't think I could do such a thing as kill a chicken, but I did. Oh! and I made a nice sauce for some rice pudding, only I used salt instead of sugar, and it had like to strangle poor papa to

death. Mamma did scold me then, but her eyes were laughing to see how frightened I was. If I could only bring myself to taste things, Barbara, but I can't, or don't. Then Hepsy Clarke came over here to help me, out of pure love, and we made a nice brown to the toast—she has so much more patience than I. I loaded her with vegetables when the washing was done, for Hepsy is very poor, you know. Dear little June, she took your going away so hard, as if it was a doom upon us, someway, and wasn't a bit like herself, but I suspect her sickness was coming on, and that made her irritable. She got very angry with me the next morning, for some trifling little thing, poor darling, and then sent down the oddest, queerest little rhyming note of apology from mamma's room. The poor child was so sorry. And what made me feel saddest of all is the little bit I found on her writing-table the day she was taken sick."

Floss took from her pocket a strip of paper, that looked as if it might have been carelessly torn from the pages of some memorandum book, and with a trembling voice read :

" ' Must I go,
While the June-time roses blow ?

Or pass,
When Fall's slow footsteps chill the grass
Or sleep,
Where winter's snow sifts soft and deep?
Well-a-day,
I cannot choose the time or way,
Yet trust,
One tender as His laws are just.
My tomb,
Whether where June-time roses bloom,
Or snows
Bury the last year's flowers low,
Will be,
What the dear Lord has blessed for me.' "

"O, Floss! sobbed Barbara, unconsciously wrought upon by the element of superstition which is incorporated in all our natures. "I wish she had never written that. I thought before that she was morbid, but now it seems as if something had told her that she was going to leave us."

"That's the way I felt, dear," sighed Florence. "Still, it may please God to spare her. Oh, I am praying so hard that if only it can be His will to spare her to us. And if he hears us, and she should get well, the doctors says that pens, pencils, and papers must all be locked up, and she must not be allowed to write a line for a year, but she must just live out of doors. That's why I expected so much from—there—I didn't

mean to say that. You must go up now and see papa—”

“No, no! he would ask me about Mortlake, and I should feel like death to have to tell him myself—I had rather mamma should know first.”

“Perhaps it would be better. Hark! there’s the postman,” said Floss, and went anxiously to the door. It was a letter addressed to Barbara, and must have been written before she left Mortlake. The contents were brief and business-like. It contained also a check for five hundred dollars.

Barbara stood there, pale and straight as a statue, after she had read it.

“If it wasn’t that we are so poor, so poor, Florence—if it wasn’t for little June lying there, I would tear this bit of paper into fragments, for it is guilt money,” she said, in a low, constrained voice.

“Money?” and Floss grew bright and eager. “O Bab, darling, we do need money so much. The doctor’s bills—and—if anything should happen—”

The two girls looked in each other’s eyes, as they stood there, under the shadow of the same dreadful foreboding; then Florence silently

turned away. The far-off voice of little June reached them at that moment, babbling, as was her wont, of flowers and brooks and winds and trees, talking sometimes about the beautiful gardens of Mortlake, anticipating the walks and the rides and the rambles in its sweet-scented groves.

It was very hard to bear, but Barbara was learning one of life's most important lessons, that heart-treasures must be placed out of the reach of danger, where the moth and the rust come not.





CHAPTER XXII.

SAD NEWS.

"Hast thou ne'er
Seen a transplanted flower?"

A WEEK passed, and Mr. Bennett had, with the assistance of Barbara and his wife, gained the large living-room—a most welcome change to him. They had a large easy-chair placed in the door-way for him, and there, amid blushing roses and fragrant honeysuckles, he sat for hours.

June's illness had taken another turn, and she lay nearly all the time in a stupor from which she could scarcely be roused at stated intervals, for medicine or nourishment. The family had given up all hope, for the doctor said he had done his utmost, but still saw no improvement.

Barbara often relieved her mother of her watch, sitting long hours at her bedside, now

working silently, now watching, with tears and prayers, the face of the unconscious girl.

They had not heard from Mortlake since, succumbing to the force of circumstances, Barbara had accepted the check; which, indeed, lifted them into comparative comfort. Nothing could exceed the indignation and astonishment of Mr. and Mrs. Bennett, when they heard the details of Barbara's visit. The wife said nothing, seeing that Barbara had suffered through her too implicit faith in her own powers of arbitration, but Mr. Bennett was not so considerate. Long confinement had weakened his ability to control his stronger feelings, and he did not spare Barbara, until her mother came to the rescue.

"If Philip had lived," Mr. Bennett exclaimed, "I should have had some one to plead my cause. It is a monstrous injustice and robbery, and God will repay them. But I am a poor man—what can I do?" he added, as he sank back helplessly.

Still, notwithstanding his indignant protest against receiving the money by which his brother had relieved his conscience, it came when it was most needed. All the outstanding bills were settled, and the little dressmaker was

kept busy cutting and making new house-dresses for Florence and her mother. Barbara redeemed her medal, bought an invalid's chair for her father, and many dainties for June. She had also indulged herself with a few strips of bright carpet to put in front of the little piano, and the room wore a cheerful aspect in spite of the shadow that gloomed their lives.

As for June, whether in spirit she was walking and talking with the angels, none could tell; but on her placid face shone a sweet serenity, and her beautiful lips were often parted in a smile so sweet and infantile that it was very touching to witness. Barbara was oftenest beside her—she could not bear to move from the bedside of her darling, even to give place to her mother. The doctor came regularly, but gave no hope. In the drawer of June's little chest, lay the snowy linens in which, before long, the sweet body was to be robed for the last, dreamless sleep. Barbara went there every day and placed fresh rose-buds about them, and touched them tenderly.

Sometimes they came across little scraps of poetry. In front of the old house, near the gate-post, was a large poplar tree, from one of

the low, branching limbs of which the ancient sign of the inn once swung.

June had always looked eagerly forward to the time when the blossoms should cover this tree in the early spring. Ever since the days of her childhood, she had gathered the little drifts that always fell when the blossoms were ripe, and kept them stored in some sacred place, calling them her summer snow.

One of the choicest of her little poems, recently discovered in manuscript and deciphered by Florence, described this annual shower.

"THE POPLAR SHOWER.

"It came through the sunny April days,
In the morning dew, in the evening haze ;
It floated afar on the balmy breeze.
And lodged in the boughs of the whispering trees ;
The happy earth was all aglow,
As it fell on its breast like a shower of snow.

"'Twas the fleece from the budding poplar leaves,
That Spring in her twining arbour weaves ;
All soft and silent it hurried by,
Like flakes that are born of the frosty sky.
The children peered at the fleeting rain,
And wondered if winter were come again ;
They ran to and fro where the gossamers blew,
And gathered them up as children do.

"All through the streets of the dusty town,
It poured its wavy drifts of down ;
It entered unbid at the parlour door,
It stayed unswept on the chamber floor ;
It sailed all over the nursery room,
It mingled its floss with the hot-house bloom,

It hung on the cage of the bird in the bower,
It flew with the bee in the cells of the flower ;
It gleamed in the light, it gloomed in the shade,
As with nature and man it rollicked and played,
Till it ran its course in the April day,
And vanished like vapour forever away."

" Oh, thus in the field of our mortal life,
Its April caprices of peace and strife,
May we see overhead in the airs of spring
The signs of a heavenly blossoming ;
A shower afloat in our earthly skies,
From the tree that standeth in Paradise,
A token and pledge as our path is trod,
That times and seasons are all of God."

When Barbara had finished this little poem her eyes suffused with tears. Floss appeared on the top stair.

" Bab, dear," she said softly, and beckoned her. " There's a lady down-stairs wishing to see you."

" A lady," said Barbara, wonderingly.

" One of the sweetest-looking faces I ever saw in my life," continued Florence—" and wasn't it lucky every thing was done, and it actually looks pretty down-stairs—and I had on my new print."

" But who can it be, dear ?" queried Barbara, " a stranger ?"

Some one from near Mortlake—as likely as not the lady you spoke of as—"

"Oh, Mrs. Worcester!" and Barbara's eyes parkled.

"I didn't ask her name, I felt so 'flusterated,' as Hepsy Clarke says. You'll go right lown, won't you?"

"Yes, as soon as I've taken off my apron, and moothed my hair." In a few moments Barbara stood with a beating heart before her new and valued friend.

"I told you I might drop in upon you," she said. "I am visiting a relative who lives four or five miles from your village, and she was kind enough to let me take the pony-chaise—so here I am. But you are pale, my dear."

"I have been watching—so long—"

"Ah, that little sick sister of yours—" said Mrs. Worcester, seeing the change in Barbara's face—"is she still very ill?"

"Very ill, madam."

"I was charged with an invitation to you all, at Baybrook, my cousin's residence. There is to be a picnic in the grounds next week—but I see it will be impossible for you to go, under the circumstances."

"Quite impossible," said Barbara.

"You have heard, I suppose, the news from Mortlake?"

"I have heard from Mortlake once," said Barbara, not noticing the sudden change in the countenance of her friend.

"It was a terrible blow to them, indeed," continued Mrs. Worcester — "I much doubt whether Mrs. Bennett will ever recover from the shock; and the father—I really don't think he ever knew what trouble was, before."

Barbara sat dazed and wondering. She was conscious of a certain terror, and in her mind's eye saw the beautiful spot which she had held as it were within hand's grasp, lapped up by devouring flames.

"Have they then lost Mortlake?" asked Barbara.

"Then you do not know—you have not heard! I understood you had received a letter, and I thought—my dear, suppose you read it for yourself." She took from her pocket-book a slip of paper, from which Barbara read the following:—

"We are pained to record the accidental death of the youngest child of Mr. Harper Bennett, an esteemed resident of this county. It is supposed

the child was trying to reach after water-lilies when she fell into the river. Had there been assistance near, she could have been saved, as the river at that place was very shallow. It is rumoured that this painful loss has dethroned the reason of the unhappy mother. The family has the sincere sympathy of the community."

Barbara read with tightly closed lips, quickened breath, and a pallor that overspread the whole face.

"I cannot realise it—scarcely believe it," she whispered—"oh! Mrs. Worcester—the sweet, sweet angel! and I felt so strangely when I talked with her that last time—and when she kissed me at the cars—she sobbed so. And now God has taken her—she asked Him to," she added in low, awe-struck tones.

"It is well with the child," murmured Mrs. Worcester.

Barbara burst into tears.

"And our own dear June—I wonder if they will soon meet!" she sobbed. "My heart did so go out to her—and she was—that woman's idol—God pity and forgive her. What a sorrowful place Mortlake must be!"

"It is a sorrowful place, my dear—the saddest

home, I think, I ever entered. They have none of them the consolations of religion, and know nothing of spiritual things, consequently they mourn with piercing cries and as those without hope. I shall never forget the day I went to see the little angel. She lay in her costly casket, over which the rarest flowers were heaped, like a fair white lily herself—and outside the darkened room, which was shrouded with crape, could be heard the mourning and lamentation of the family. There was no reason in their grief—and for that, as much as for their terrible loss, I pitied them.”

“Poor Mortlake!” sighed Barbara, with quivering lips—“I think I could not bear to live there, now.”

“It has but few attractions, now the little child is gone,” responded Mrs. Worcester. “I believe they think of giving it up altogether; Mrs. Bennett will on no account stay in the house—she has been in her city home for more than a week, and the girls went with her.”

“Oh, Mrs. Worcester!” exclaimed Barbara, and the pained look she gave was full of a strange, almost frightened, intelligence.

“Yes, dear, they have as good as lost Mort-

lake. I presume before long it will be occupied by strangers."

After a few moments more of constrained conversation, Mrs. Worcester rose to go.

"Would you like to see June?" asked Barbara—"I should also be pleased to make you acquainted with my mother."

"Will it not disturb her?"

"Oh, no—she is past that, I fear," said Barbara, with a sigh, as she led the way.

Mrs. Bennett sat at the bed's head. She had been told, by Florence, who was in the house, so she silently held out her hand as Barbara whispered an introduction—with a sad smile.

"She looks already like an angel; what a beautiful face!" said Mrs. Worcester, and even Barbara was satisfied with the unmistakable though sorrowful admiration which spoke in her every feature as she left the room.

"My dear, she and that little child were strangely alike," she said, as she went down stairs.

"I know it—I did not see it before, but now I do," Barbara responded.

"I trust God may spare her to you; and let me hope we may sometime see you all at my own home."

Barbara pressed her hand, but she could say nothing—and Mrs. Worcester kissed her farewell.

Mrs. Worcester had gone, and Barbara went back to her post, with a heavier heart than ever before. Little Emma dead—drowned—why had not some prophetic voice reached her dull heart?

“Something should have told me,” she murmured, with quivering lips. “It seems something so mysterious and awful that, while you are eating and drinking and perhaps jesting, your best friend may be in the perils of death; sweet little Emma Harper! There are plenty of little children to play with her now, and I believe that was the longing of her life.” She had not dared to say, not even to think, what her father said when the news was told him.

“It is the judgment of God.”

“But, my dear,” said his wife gently, “what will you say of our own trials.”

“I will say that we strive to bear them as Christians should,” was his ready answer—“and, thank heaven, there is no stinging conscience to keep them company?”

It was a day of sadness for Barbara, and she was not sorry when night released her from her duties, and she could be alone by herself to think

over the strange, dreadful news she had heard. Still, as Mrs. Worcester had said, it was well for the child. There was a volume of meaning in those few words, as in the woman's face and voice when she spoke them. What was there for the child to grow into, but frivolity, fashion, vanity, and worldly lusts that war against the soul? Already she had felt the canker of an aimless life eating into her sensitive spirit—already she had begun to long for better things.

So Barbara had caught a glimpse, as it were, of the courts of heaven, where her sweet little cousin was safely housed and lodged, and made happy with the angel companions she had wanted so long; and her heart was comforted.





CHAPTER XXIII.

LIFE, NOT DEATH.

"How the poet's fire lit up
That mild blue eye, and kindled that pale cheek."

IN the following morning, Barbara exchanged places with her mother, and seated herself by the bedside of her still unconscious sister. She had caught a glimpse of her father, seated at the table, trying his long unpracticed hand; laboriously striving to learn to write over again, as he often said, with a patient smile. She had seen her mother moving about the room in the sunshine, and the whole picture had such a sweet home-look that it reconciled her more and more to the loss of Mortlake.

In contrast so vivid that it brought pitiful tears to her eyes, she saw the great darkened parlours of that other dwelling, heard the sounds

of anguish and sorrow from the undisciplined natures within, gazed in imagination upon the lovely dead face that had always smiled upon her, and silently asked, as the greatest boon of her life, that God would grant her a contented spirit.

With what emotions she looked upon the lovely sculptured face of the sick girl, little June, as she had always been called—the child-woman, to whom belonged such wonderful impulses and attributes!

“Dear sister,” she murmured, “dear angel June, are you going away to make heaven seem nearer and more precious to us all? Are you going to sing your sweetest songs in the golden city?”

As she gazed, her heart swelling with love, there dawned upon the sick girl’s wasted face a great light. The whole character of its expression was changed; lids and lips moved, and her hands closed over the coverlet. A great tremor came upon Barbara.

“Mamma, come quickly,” cried Barbara, hastily, running to the door, “I think June is dying.”

The pen fell from Mr. Harper’s trembling fingers. Mrs. Harper threw down the work she

had just lifted, and ran across the hall. Florence turned her face to the wall for a moment, and covered her eyes with trembling fingers. Another moment, and they were all at her bedside. The soft halo of the fully risen sun threw a nimbus of glory over the young girl's head.

"If she only knows us," whispered the kneeling mother, "before she goes."

June's white lids had opened dreamily. The soul seemed drifting back for a moment. She looked around, and a beautiful smile rippled over her face, as she caught Barbara's eye.

"Darling," whispered Barbara, kneeling close beside her, "little June, do you know me?"

There was an answering gleam of intelligence. The pale, weak lips moved slowly.

"I'm glad—you've—come home," she said very softly and slowly.

"Blessed darling! she knows me. I have been home a long time, darling; I came as soon as I heard you were sick," said Barbara, her voice shaken with emotion. "Are you glad to see me?"

"Yes," was the feeble response. "I thought it was winter—so cold! Are the roses all gone?"

"Winter—oh, no, darling, it is summer yet, and there are plenty of roses. Shall Floss gather you some?"

"Floss! Floss!" called June.

Florence presented herself, her eyes swollen, and her cheeks pallid. June smiled—she lifted one of her weak hands, and tried to clasp her sister's fingers.

"Will you get me some roses?" she asked.

"Yes, now," said Floss, and turned away that she might hide the streaming tears. Presently she came back with a lovely nosegay. June's eyes grew bright with human love and interest.

"May I have some milk?" she asked, turning feebly to her mother.

"Well done! Well done!"

The rough voice, though toned to its lowest cadence, preceded the old physician.

"Doctor, is she dying?" asked Floss, in uncontrollable terror.

"Dying! bother! She's going to disappoint us after all; dying, no; she's going to get well."

Barbara sprang from her kneeling posture, and caught the doctor's hand.

"Come, come, you needn't thank me, child," and even his voice trembled, for Barbara's eyes

talked. "She is going to get well, there's no doubt of that," he added, with professional emphasis. "She is ten per cent. better; must have been coming round all night. Now I warn you. Keep those confounded pens, and books, and paper out of her hands. As to her writing poetry, if I should catch her at it, I should be tempted to give her a ducking in the nearest river, and cool the burning fever of her brain, as some quill-ridden fellow says. It takes a strong man to bear such fevers and transports, and it wears him out sometimes. Put her out of doors in the clover, and you'll see her round here blooming like one of your own garden roses. Thank God! its something I didn't look for, though I detected a slight change yesterday; so slight, though, I did not dare to give you any hope. She only needs nourishment and plenty more of what you have so abundantly given her, good nursing. Leave her with this young lady here—she can govern her best, with due deference to you, Mrs. Bennett."

The doctor had gone, his own kindly heart brimming over with happiness. We often talk of the cares, the self-denials, the suffering, mental and bodily, of the good physician—do we set

over against these, as we should, the welling-up of gratitude, the unspeakable joy and triumph that flow into his soul, as he feels that, under God, he has been the instrument of saving life? that he has knit hearts to him with everlasting bonds? How beautiful to meet on every hand the rapture of thankfulness; to feel the clasp of unutterable blessing; to see the eyes of mother, father, sister, or wife, over-brimming with delicious tears. At such a time as that, I think the good doctor must feel that his heaven has begun on earth.

June had dropped asleep again, but it was no longer the trance of exhaustion, but a natural, gentle slumber.

"I'll never murmur again," said Barbara, softly. "I'll never wish for Mortlake, though it is rightfully ours. Poor Uncle Harper! What agony he must suffer! I am sorry for him. I am sorry for that heart-broken mother, sitting in her loneliness, with no one to comfort her. God has been very kind to us—Oh, so kind! Our little circle is still unbroken—and—" looking at her hands with a smile, "we can all work for each other."

Envy, and anger, and all uncharitableness,

seemed to have taken their final leave of her, and the mirror of her mind was left unclouded. "I shall not always be so happy, perhaps," she said softly to herself, "but I shall always have some one to go to, now that I have found a Saviour."





CHAPTER XXIV.

WONDERFUL NEWS.

"There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them as we will."

IN the evening, after the supper dishes were washed and put away, her father seated at the table in his favourite chair, his book before him, Florence established as nurse for half the night, her mother resting weary body and brain upon the old lounge, Barbara let down her hair, threw on a light mantle, and went out into the cool, soft evening.

"Dear Barbara," said a sweet, familiar voice, and Belle Savage was just coming in at the gate. The two friends met with kisses.

"I was just coming to congratulate you; the doctor says June will get well," and she had no need to hear the confirmation from Barbara's lips, for her dancing eyes assured her.

"Isn't it beautiful?" Belle added. "I had

to put on my hat and run over—and here are some oranges papa brought—will you give them to her?”

Barbara took the fruit with thanks.

“Papa said a gentleman called at his office to-day, and inquired for you. He spoke of himself as a great stranger, but a relative. Papa was wondering whether he had found you yet—he seemed so very anxious.”

“Perhaps it was my uncle Harper; but no, he surely knows where we live.”

“It was a younger man, I should judge, by the description papa gave,” said Belle.

“I don’t know who it could be—unless—” a pleasant smile kindled her face, “possibly Mr. Worcester, whose mother called on me not long ago.”

“I don’t think he left his name,” responded Belle. “What a lovely moonlight! But I must hurry back, mamma is watching for me at the gate; I’m such a coward, you know.”

“And I’ll watch you from this gate,” said Barbara, laughing, “if you can’t stay;” and, with a mutual good-night, the two parted. Barbara still remained after the footsteps of her friend had long subsided into silence. The moon

made fantastic shadows, and from where she stood, the landscape took on a weird and foreign aspect. She saw a bridge spanning silver-white water, where was neither bridge nor water. A clump of trees not far off took on the semblance of a ruined castle, with its loop-holes and its battlements, its turrets, and its towers. Barbara had eyes for nothing but the exceeding loveliness of this fancied scene, and she was startled at the sound of an approaching step—more than startled as, turning, she saw a man beside her, apparently studying her features intently.

“Sir, did you wish—” and there she paused irresolutely.

“Pardon me; is this Miss Barbara Bennett?” She thought the voice was unsteady.

“That is my name, sir; did you wish to see my father?”

“I should like—presently—on a matter of business—” and his voice trembled more and more as he drew his hat closer over his eyes. Barbara grew alarmed and withdrew inside the gate.

“I hear he has been ill—” the stranger continued, evidently striving to master some emotion.

"He has been very ill, and for a long time," said Barbara. "We hope now he is entirely recovering. Would you like to see him?"

There was a long silence, so long that Barbara felt like turning and running back to the house. The man might be a lunatic—what might he be?

"I—I can't dissemble any longer—" and the outstretched hands and broken voice told of deep feeling. "Barbara, darling—oh, sister Barbara!"

"Philip! it can't be Philip!" Barbara exclaimed.

"It is Philip."

With a great cry that was smothered in his breast, Barbara fell into the arms outstretched to receive her. Weak and trembling, she stood up again to be more certain.

Yes, it was Philip. Now that his hat was off she knew him, would have known him anywhere. An older Philip—a bronzed Philip, but the same clear black eyes, the same magnificent form.

"Oh, Philip!" was all she kept repeating in an ecstasy of joy—"Oh, Philip!"

His eyes glistened and his lips trembled.

"I saw you in the cars some weeks ago," he said, "and my heart seemed strangely drawn towards you. 'My sister would look like that,'

I said—but it never occurred to me that you could be anywhere but in New York. At last I found Uncle Harper, but he was in such deep affliction that I could only get your address—and after that I lingered about, almost fearing to find you out.”

“But why?” asked Barbara.

“You cannot tell how I have suffered, Barbara—nor can I ever make you understand what it is to be torn away from friends and kindred under such suspicious circumstances; or how pride stands in the way of an open avowal of wrong-doing—or temptation weakens the intentions. But tell me all you can. One of you is very sick.”

“Was,” said Barbara, with glistening eyes; “dear little June! How you will love her, and how proud you will be of her! She is out of danger now. This very day the doctor said she would get well.”

“Little June! She was the baby when I left,” his voice trembled again. “And father? he has been very sick, they told me.”

“Very, but he too is getting well, Oh, so fast. All the mercies are coming together—and—it seems like a strange but beautiful dream, that I

should stand here talking to you whom all had given up for dead years ago. Oh, Philip, where have you been all these years? Look!" she added, not giving him time to answer, and leading him half-way up the garden-path, so that they commanded a view of the open windows, "there sits father by his shaded lamp; mother is lying on the lounge—June and Florence are upstairs, where you see that light."

The young man gazed, all his soul in his eyes. Then, drawing Barbara closer to him, he whispered huskily:

"How shall I make myself known? I left *him* in the prime of life. Oh, how altered, how altered! Poor father—I can hardly bear the sight—and, Barbara, it has all been my doing."

Barbara was silent.

"You have had hard times, Bab, darling—confess, now. This old dilapidated house—your dress—Barbara, you have all suffered from poverty."

"It don't seem so now, dear Phillp—oh, no, nothing seems hard or poor, since God has given us back you and June, half sobbed Barbara.

"And Uncle Harper Bennett has played the villain in some way; I have heard of that—and I shall have something to say about it, too."

"Poor Uncle Harper—we must forgive him, Philip," said Barbara, in a low voice, taking his hand in hers. "The little child, the idol of the household, was drowned, you know, not long ago."

"Yes, and he takes it hardly—he's not the same man. And my poor father—the terrible changes in his face! How he must have suffered! How will he receive the returning prodigal, Barbara—and you all so poor?"

Barbara trembled both with joy and dread, as she answered:

"Who else should receive him?"

"My darling! you are just the same heroic, blessed little Bab that you were seven long years ago—and," he added, as soon as he had conquered his emotions—"I have come to take care of you. I will work my fingers to the bone but what I'll lift you out of this."

Barbara laid her head against his shoulder.

If he had only come to do that—she thought, shutting her eyes and crowding back the happy, happy tears—if he had come to be the joy and pride of his father's sorely suffering heart, to bless them all with the sacred love of a son and brother, what mattered it now how hard their past had been?

"Do you remember that December afternoon, Barbara? Let me tell you all now, before I go in."

Barbara lifted her head—too well she remembered the day to which he referred.

"I went to the bank and got the money. It was in a few large notes. I put them in my counting-house wallet. I had made good time, and there were still twenty-five minutes to spare before I was expected home. On leaving the bank I did not notice that I was followed by a man who bore a very suspicious character. Bob Colyer met me at the foot of the steps. I don't know how he ever wormed himself into my confidence, though I knew he was not exactly reputable. But he was a young fellow of fine appearance, dressed well, and had the *entrée* of the best society. I was not aware of what I have learned since, that he was a confirmed gambler, I only knew that he exercised a good deal of influence over me. Poor fellow!" Philip's voice dropped, "he died a fearful death not long ago, on board a burning car. But to return; he asked me into a drinking-saloon, and as he had sometimes treated me, I did not like to refuse. I had not at that time learned to say 'no.'

"I knew that my father was expecting me every moment, and that I had no business to dispose of a fraction of the time while I had his money in my pocket—but I was foolish and weak enough to be persuaded—and my punishment was just.

"I recollect drinking but one glass, and feeling strangely bewildered a moment afterwards—then of finding myself in a wretched old lodging-house—probably it was at a late hour on the following day—in the lowest part of the city, among the shipping.

"Imagine, if you can, dear Barbara, my despair when I found that I had been robbed of the ten thousand dollars. I felt at once disgraced, undone. Through my carelessness, if not through actual guilt, my poor father was ruined. Besides that, the horrible drug with which I had been dosed—for it is probable the fellow had accomplices at the bar, had so befogged my brain that I had no power to reason accurately. My only feeling was intense fright coupled with shame. Never, never would I look upon the face of my father again. All I wished and longed for was the power to fly to the utmost ends of the earth, and there hide myself from human sight.

"Fortunately, the villains had not taken my watch, which was a valuable gold one. In my desperation I sold it for one half its worth to a sailor, and by his advice boarded the vessel in which he was to sail—The *Sacramento*—bound to California. A more wretched, desperate man than your brother never lived. Oh, how hard it was to leave you, little Bab, my mother—the playful baby girl, little June. Do you know that even in that awful time I thought of my promise of the Maltese kitten, and tried to plan how I could send you one. Tortured by visions of the home I had lost, of the inevitable disgrace that must attack my father, I only hoped that—as I intended you should—you might all think me dead. It never once occurred to me, that it would ever be said that I had yielded to temptation, stolen the money and run off with it.

"From that dreadful day to this, liquor has never touched my lips. I changed my fine clothes for a coarse suit, sank my personality, went by another name, and became a miner, determined, with the help of God, sometime to refund that money. And I have worked from that day till the day I started for home, with

three times the ten thousand, yes, and more—
and here I am, back again, with an unsullied
name, and money enough to make you all happy,
so far as money can do it.”

“Oh, Philip!” cried Barbara—“it seems too
much joy to bear. I can’t realise that you are
here—but to think you have come to remove
the burden of poverty from poor papa—how can
we bear it all? I don’t believe there is a happier
girl in all the world, than I.”

“But now, dear, how to break the news to
father! Mother seems asleep—how still it is
here. What shall I do? tell me.”





CHAPTER XXV.

PHILIP'S RECEPTION.

"Heaven seal their happiness."

"**W**ILL it be best for me to go right in as if nothing unusual had happened?" he asked.

"No, let me go first; I will introduce you. O Philip, if only I don't turn giddy."

She paused for a moment, quite faint.

"There, I feel better now. Stand in the shadow, while I speak to papa."

She went softly in. Mr. Bennett looked up smiling at her approach. She stood beside him, but a little back of his chair, stroking his gray locks.

"Papa, I've got something strange, very, very strange, to tell you. Can you bear wonderful news?"

"What is it, my darling?"

"I wonder if you have strength to bear it?"

He turned and looked at her. Her eyes were full of tears, yet she did not look sorrowful.

"Has the will been found? Has Mortlake—" he paused, for she shook her head.

"Something ten thousand times better than Mortlake, something so wonderful that I can hardly realise it myself, though I have seen it."

The tremor in her voice, the light in her eyes, roused him yet more; caused the weary mother to lift herself from the lounge, for she had not been sleeping.

"You always were a little wonder-seer, my Barbara. Come; out with your marvelous story. Have you found diamonds? or—why, Barbara, child, what are you looking at? Who is out there?" and he roused himself in earnest.

"I am looking at—O papa, papa!" she fell in a transport of tears and smiles at his side. "Now, papa, dear, be calm; you must be very calm. I am looking at Philip! right in his eyes."

"Is she crazy?" murmured her father, in an awe-struck voice.

"No—don't get up, papa; you must sit still. I'll bring him to you. Here he is."

"I have been gone for a long time on the errand you sent me, father," said Philip, in a deep, trembling voice, "but I have brought back your ten thousand dollars. Here they are."

Mr. Bennett said not a word, but leaned back in his chair, his eyes fastened on his son's face, his own face almost vacant; but the mother! With one low cry she was at his side, and mother and long-lost son were clasped close in each other's arms.

"Oh, my boy! my son! The Philip I have yearned for all these long years: has God in His mercy given you back to us? My only son! my first-born! Father, look in his face; there is no dishonour there. Oh, my Philip! my Philip! how shall I thank God enough for this?"

It was well the woman fainted then, for it brought life and colour back into the father's pallid face. In another moment he was himself again, and presently they all sat together, joyful wondering, rejoicing and listening—Florence on one side of the new-found brother, Barbara on the other, while he told the story of his misfortune, his perils, and his deliverance.

How beautiful it was! The sternest, truest matter-of-fact, and how like a wonderful romance.

It was late that night before they separated. In the blessed weeks that followed, it was a happy family group that could be just seen by the curious passers-by on the old piazza. June, still an invalid, pale and very lovely, and not a little exacting, sitting in their midst, both son and daughter given back to them, as it were from the dead.

Mr. Bennett grew speedily better. He did not seem to care about venturing upon mercantile business again; his ambition was now to till the ground, and in that desire his son participated. It was good for them all that they had been afflicted; life would henceforth be better worth the living.

Of Harper Bennett and his family there is but little more to tell. The weak, fond mother never recovered the full use of her reason, but went round like a shadow at times, searching for her lost darling.

How the will was abstracted from the bag, and by whom, Barbara never certainly knew; though, as she distinctly heard the rustle of a woman's garments on the eventful night, she always believed that Mrs. Bennett performed the treacherous office.

At all events, the farm became hateful to Harper and his family. No one seemed inclined to hire it as it stood, and the owner signified that he would sell it cheap for cash. One morning, a gentleman well known as a real estate agent came into his office.

"I understand you wish to sell Mortlake, sir," he said.

"Yes," said Mr. Harper Bennett, a look of pain on his face, "cheap for cash."

"How cheap?"

The merchant named his price.

"I am instructed by a friend of mine, who does not choose to be known in the transaction, to manage the business for him. I will give you so much for the farm," naming the sum.

"I will take it. Have the papers made out."

"And I will pay you an installment to seal the bond. To-morrow I shall see you again."

"Very well," was the answer.

On the following day the man came back again.

"Everything is ready," he said, "and I am authorised to sign for the purchaser. Here is my authority."

Harper Bennett turned as white as the wall

near which he sat, as he read the signature, written in large, bold letters :

"Philip Bennett."

"So he has bought Mortlake, has he?" he asked, putting his lips tightly together. "Is it possible he brought home so much money? Great heaven! what a lift for my brother. He buys on speculation, of course?"

"I suppose he does."

"So, so," and a bitter smile made his face look sardonic. "Mortlake has gone to them, after all. Well, I wish them joy of it—more than I ever got out of it."

* * * *

They all adopted June's suggestion.

"I never liked Mortlake for a name," she said, "and now I like it less than ever. Mortlake sounds as if it meant the lake of death, as indeed it proved to sweet little Emma. I want it named something bright and beautiful as it is."

"I shall sell the low land down by the river," said Philip.

June clapped her hands.

"That is good news," she said; "and now what name shall we give it?"

"Call it Golden Hill," said Philip.

"Too prosaic," Barbara responded.

"Daisy Lawn," suggested Florence.

"Suppose you name it Heart's-ease," said Mrs. Bennett, smiling.

"Silver Lake," responded June.

"Why, that's as prosaic as Golden Hill," said Philip.

"I like June's name best," said Mr. Bennett, who had been silently listening. "It was Mortlake, and the change to Silver Lake will not be so violent as it might be to a totally different name."

So they christened it Silver Lake.

Blithe and beautiful Barbara is yet the angel of the new home. Come with me up this gently-sloping ascent. Move softly between the ferns and sweet-scented herbs, and look down from the opening between these noble old elms.

The sun is setting now, and goldens every stately window-front in the vine-clad wall yonder. The porch is beautifully draped with wisteria and golden honey-suckle, the wall is flanked with old-fashioned lilacs, and you can distinctly see the figures grouped about the threshold. The lovely girl throwing a light shawl over her mother's shoulders is Barbara;

and as she lifts her dark eyes, even from here you can see they are filled with a heavenly serenity.

The fathers sits on the upper step reading the paper. From within comes the soft, dreamy music often heard in that house of late, and the touch is that of Mr. Worcester. Mrs. Worcester sits outside, talking to Mrs. Bennett. Philip is fastening a stray creeper in its legitimate place. Florence is knitting a tidy for a coming fair, while June, the dreamer and poet, whose white hands are idle now, perforce, and have been for many months, watches the soft, white clouds, and—she cannot help it—thinks poetry with every breath she draws. Is it not a lovely household group? And does it not seem as if God had written over them:

“MY PEACE I GIVE UNTO YOU”?





SHORT LIST OF BOOKS.

PUBLISHED BY

JAMES GEMMELL,
GEORGE IV. BRIDGE, EDINBURGH.

LONDON.....HAMILTON, ADAMS, & CO. ; SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, & CO.
EDINBURGH.....OLIVER & BOYD ; J. MENZIES & CO.
GLASGOW.....J. MENZIES & CO. ; PORTEOUS BROTHERS.

Just Ready, in cr. 8vo, price 2/ per vol. ; or, complete in 8 vols. 16/.
New Edition of

WILSON'S TALES OF THE BORDERS, AND OF SCOTLAND.

"It is not, as we understand it, to be a complete work, but is to contain a selection of some of the best stories. . . . A distinct good is to be done to the reading public by this issue."—*Scotsman*.

CONTENTS OF VOLUMES.

VOLUME I.—The Vacant Chair—Tibby Fowler—My Black Coat ; or, the Breaking of the Bride's China—We'll have another—The Soldier's Return—Grizel Cochrane : a Tale of Tweedmouth Moor—Sayings and Doings of Peter Paterson—The Prodigal Son—Sir Patrick Hume : a Tale of the House of Marchmont—Charles Lawson—The Orphan—The Seeker—Squire Ben—The Fair—Archy Armstrong—The Widow's Ae Son—The Death of the Chevalier de la Beaute—The Procrastinator—Ups and Downs ; or, David Stuart's Pilgrimage—The Cripple ; or, Ebenezer the Disowned.

VOLUME I.—The Leveller—The Bride—The Smuggler—The Dominie's Class—The Hen-pecked Man—I canna be Fashed ; or, Bailie Grant's Confessions—The Poacher's Progress—The Royal Bridal ; or, the King May come in the Cadger's Way—The Faa's Revenge : a Tale of the Border Gypsies—The Outlaw ; or, the Maiden of Ledwick—The Broken Heart : a Tale of the Rebellion.

VOLUME III.—The Guidwife of Coldingham ; or, the Surprise of Fast Castle—The Adventures of Launceton Errington and his Nephew Mark : a Tale of Lindisferne—Judith the Egyptian ; or, the Fate of the Heir of Riccon—The Deserted Wife—The Unbidden Guest ; or, Jedburgh's Regal Festival—The Covenanting Family—The Festival—The Simple Man is the Beggar's Brother—The Unknown—The Solitary of the Cave—The Order of the Garter : a Story of Wark Castle—The Red Hall ; or, Berwick in the Year 1296.

VOLUME IV.—Perseverance—The Irish Reaper—Edmund and Helen : a Ballad—Roger Goldie's Narrative—Trials and Triumphs—Laidley Worm of Spindleston Haugh—Johnny Brotherston's Five Sunny Days—The Hermit of the Hills—Ballad—The Minister's Daughter—The Faithful Wife.

VOLUME V.—The Poor Scholar—Reuben Purves ; or, the Speculator—The One-Armed Tar—Midside Maggie ; or, the Bannock of Tollishill—The First and Second Marriage—The Twin Brothers—Leaves from the Diary of an Aged Spinster—Madeline of Roeclough—The Adopted Son—The Doom of Soulla—The Baron's Vow.

VOLUME VI.—Leaves from the Life of Alexander Hamilton—The Wife or the Wuddy—Willie Wastle's Account of his Wife—Polwarth on the Green—

Bill Stanley ; or, a Sailor's Story—The Recollections of a Village Patriarch—The Whitsome Tragedy—The First Foot—The Persecuted Elector ; or, Passages from the Life of Simon Gourlay—An Old Tar's Yarn.

VOLUME VII.—Coldingham Abbey ; or, the Double Revenge—The Heroine—The Story of Dugald Glen, the Shepherd of Dilston—The Mysterious Exchange—The Chase : a Passage from the History of the Rebellion—The Thriftless Heir—The Foundling ; or, the Heiress of Castle Glower—The Fugitive—Lottery Hall—The Fatal Secret—The Sabbath : a Legend of Dunbar—The Blacksmith of Plumtree—Mary Armstrong—The Monks of Dryburgh.

VOLUME VIII.—The Lost Heir of the House of Elphinstone—The Countess of Cassilis—The Mysterious Disappearance—Patrick O'Flannigan—The Siege—The Avenger—The Stepmother—The Freebooters of Coldstream—Mary Merton—Seven Lights—The Lord of Hermitage—Red Eric and Lord Delaval—The Two Sisters.

Now publishing, Demy 16mo, in Ornamental Cloth Covers.

BIOGRAPHIES

OF

SCOTTISH REFORMERS, PREACHERS, MARTYRS, ETC.

"These Biographies are well written. The leading events in each life pass rapidly before us, and the story is so well told that the reader will find it difficult to lay down any of the 'Lives' until he has finished it."—*Reformed Presbyterian Witness*.

By JEAN L. WATSON.

LIFE OF RICHARD CAMERON. 70 pp., with View of Monument at Airmoss, and Falkland Palace, price 6d.

LIFE OF HUGH MILLER. 132 pp., with View of Bass Rock on Cover, price 9d.

LIFE OF RALPH ERSKINE. 99 pp., with Portrait, price 9d.

LIFE OF EBENEZER ERSKINE. 104 pp., with Portrait, price 9d.

LIFE OF THOMAS GUTHRIE, D.D. 106 pp., with Portrait and Illustration on Cover, price 9d.

LIFE OF DONALD CARGILL. 60 pp., with Views of Glasgow Cathedral and Martyrs' Monument, Edinburgh, price 6d.

LIFE OF ROBERT MURRAY M'CHEYNE. With View of his Church in Dundee, price 9d.

LIFE OF THOMAS CHALMERS, D.D., LL.D. With View of Kilmany Church. 134 pp., price 9d.

LIFE OF NORMAN MACLEOD, D.D. With Portrait and View of Barony Church on Cover, price 9d.

LIFE OF ANDREW THOMSON, D.D. Price 1/6.

LIFE OF ROBERT SMITH CANDLISH, D.D., Minister of Free St. George's Church, and Principal of the New College, Edinburgh. 178 pp., with portrait, price 2/.

LIFE AND TIMES OF THOMAS BOSTON: Pastor of Ettrick. Price 2/.

THE WATER-CRESS BOY. With Frontispiece, price 6d.

WILLIE'S BRINGING-UP. With Frontispiece, price 6d.

THE ERSKINES: EBENEZER AND RALPH. By J. Ker, D.D., and Jean L. Watson. 203 pp., with Two Portraits and Engraving of Gairney Bridge. Price 1/6.

By JOHN KER, D.D.

THE ERSKINES: EBENEZER AND RALPH. With Engraving of Gairney Bridge. Price 6d.

By ROBERT MACGREGOR.

LIFE OF JOHN MACDONALD, D.D., "The Apostle of the North." 96 pp., price 9d.

THE JESUITS: A SKETCH OF THE ORIGIN AND PROGRESS OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS. 110 pp., price 9d.

MEMORIALS OF THE BASS ROCK. 136 pp., price 9d.

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF GIROLAMO SAVONAROLA. By Annie C. Macleod. 123 pp., with Portrait, price 9d.

Foolscap 8vo, price 1/6.

OUR MOTHER: A LIFE PICTURE.

BEING A LIFE OF

MRS. KRUMMACHER.

WIFE OF THE AUTHOR OF "THE SUFFERING SAVIOUR."

Translated from the German by a well-known Author.

"Deep appreciation of the purity and peace of home-life enables German writers to depict it as no others can. . . . Possesses all the pathos, sweet simplicity, and lofty teaching which characterize the best German story writers. The translation is beautifully done. A capital gift-book."—*Irish Baptist Magazine.*

In foolscap 8vo, neatly bound in cloth.

THE ANCHOR SERIES

OF

BOOKS FOR THE YOUNG.

The following are now ready, price 1/6.

UNCLE TOM'S CABIN. By Mrs H. B. Stowe.

LUCY CLARE, AND THE BABES IN THE BASKET.
In 1 vol.

THE BASKET OF FLOWERS. Edited by Dr G. T. Beddell, Philadelphia; and THE HISTORY OF SUSAN GRAY, by Mrs Sherwood. In 1 vol.

THE PRINCE OF THE HOUSE OF DAVID. By Rev. J. H. Ingraham.

GLENCOE PARSONAGE. By Mrs A. E. Porter.

THE KING'S DAUGHTER. By Pansy, Author of "Ester Ried."

THE JUDGE'S SONS: a Story of Wheat and Tares. By Mrs. E. D. Kendall.

STRAWBERRY HILL. By Clara Vance.

BARBARA. By the same Author.

THE TALBURY GIRLS. By the Same Author.

"They are handy, legibly printed, and attractively bound, most suitable volumes for a Sabbath school library. . . . As now presented, they are a marvel of printing, binding, and cheapness."—*Edinburgh Courant*.

"May be commended to the notice of teachers and others, as prize works for juvenile readers. They are tastefully got up at a very cheap rate, and the choice made in the selection of favourite stories is all that could be desired."—*Dundee Advertiser*.

Foolscap 8vo, price 1/ per vol.

THE IVY SERIES

OF

JUVENILE BOOKS.

THE HISTORY OF SUSAN GRAY.

THE BASKET OF FLOWERS.

THE BABES IN THE BASKET.

THE HISTORY OF LUCY CLARE.

